

Laws of the Spiritual Life



by Father Basil William Maturin

Laws of the Spiritual Life



by Father Basil William Maturin

The Principles of the Beatitudes

One of the greatest achievements of the human mind in modern times has been the discovery that underlying and controlling all the apparently disconnected phenomena of nature is Law. For ages the universe presented to men a vast panorama of constant change, each of its phenomena standing alone, some of these changes coming in orderly sequence, many of them apparently capricious. The silent heavens and



the storm-swept earth, what had they to say to one another? The seasons marched with steady tread, but often indeed interrupted and held back by violent outbursts that betokened the presence of some angry God. But why the changes followed in regular sequence was known no more than why the sun rose and set, or why the wind blew from north or south.

It has been the result of careful and patient study to discover that underlying all the phenomena of Nature and governing all her actions, there is Law. Caprice gives way, the more we know her, to order, and order is the result of Law. We feel so sure of this now that we are certain that her most fitful moods and her most exceptional acts can be reduced to the controlling power of law. Of some of the laws as yet we know little or nothing, but of their existence we have no doubt. Indeed, so great is the change that has passed over the human mind within the last few years that it would baffle the imagination of a man of ordinary education

to conceive of any part of the universe, however distant, in which Law did not reign, Through the length and breadth of her vast domain, into the minutest parts of her system, like nerves in the human body, run the forces that rule her alike in the infinitely small or in the infinitely great, and as the nerves convey the commands of the will, so, behind these forces, stands a mighty Will whose rule they represent and carry out.

It is the same in the moral world. We know less of the laws that govern the workings of the mind and heart and will, but we know enough to feel confident that this higher and more mysterious world forms no exception to the principle of law and order that reigns everywhere in the physical universe. Whatever we may allow ourselves to think in moments of discouragement at our own failures, or at times when we seem to see the darker side of human life and the degradation of character and the triumph of evil, yet in calmer moments of reflection and insight we know full well that character is not the mere result of the accident of circumstances and environment, nor the product of the action of external forces, Within the mysterious world of personality Law reigns, and controls the movement of every thought, the growth of every desire, the development of every passion. The poor creature of impulse tossed hither and thither by every uncontrolled desire and passion, the plaything of circumstance and external influences, has sunk to this state, in which personality has become but the loose bond that holds together the most destructive forces, as truly under the control of Law as the strongest and most self-controlled. Did we but know these laws more accurately, we could analyse and define every step by which the prodigal falls and by which the noblest rise and grow strong.

Yet however limited our knowledge of psychology, every one of us knows enough to be fully aware of the fact whenever

we violate any of the laws of our moral nature. Those laws cannot be broken without a protest which vibrates throughout our whole being. The broken law inflicts a pain, in a way, more acute and more lasting than any physical pain, and it may be questioned whether there is any joy that is greater than that which suffuses the soul when for the sake of fidelity to the law of its moral being it makes some costly sacrifice. It is good no doubt to know as much as can be known about these laws and the method of their action; it is good to understand the working of the machinery of our inmost being; but our nature by God's goodness is so constituted that it works, so to speak, automatically, and gives its clear and sharp protest against any infringement of her laws.

And the same principle of Law reigns also in the spiritual sphere. It would be difficult to imagine that the God of law and order had exempted our nature from the government of Law in its highest operations. And yet there are not a few who while they are orderly and regular in every other department of life seem to think that the spiritual life is to be an exception. The proper dread of anything like mechanicalness or routine becomes exaggerated into a rejection of all method, system or regularity in spiritual things. They refuse to lay down rules for prayer or the frequenting of the sacraments. They profess that their relations with God can be controlled by no rule and ought to be the spontaneous utterance of Love, and that it is useless to try and force themselves to pray simply because it is the hour of prayer, just as much as it would be useless to bind themselves to certain times for conversation with a friend; that to force themselves to receive the sacraments because a certain day in the week or month has come round is to run the risk of pure formalism in the holiest actions of life. The soul will not rise to order, and if it has not risen, we had better wait till it does.

But such arguments, while it is easy to see and respect the truth in them, ignore the fact that the spiritual life is a Life, a Life imparted to the soul, which has to be tended, developed, nourished, disciplined. "The Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a seed which a man took and cast into a field and which grows by its own laws, first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear." This life is imparted in Baptism, strengthened in Confirmation, nourished in Holy Communion, healed and cleansed in the Sacrament of Penance, As the natural life must be fed, developed and disciplined, if it is to attain to its full strength and usefulness, so must the spiritual life. And as the natural life, if neglected, will run to seed, so will the spiritual life.

It is necessary, therefore, that there should be order and system in the spiritual life, as necessary as in the physical or intellectual. He who will only eat when he is hungry and eat only what he likes will soon fall into ill-health. And he who only studies and thinks when he is in the humour for it, will soon find his intellectual life fall into decay. And he who prays and receives the sacraments only when he feels drawn to it, will soon find his spiritual desires and vision grow weak and dim and uncertain and gradually die away.

But, moreover, the necessity for this external habit of order and discipline is based upon the principle that the spiritual life is itself controlled by Law.

There is nothing more beautiful than the infinite variety of the lives of the Saints. Each is a study, indeed we may say a revelation, in itself. There does not seem to be any fixed rule that binds them, any method upon which their lives are formed. Each stands alone, letting his life flow forth in a reckless torrent that is apparently controlled only by the uncontrollable passion of love to God and love to man. There is a daring, a freedom and a freshness that is startling. A

liberty that surprises, perhaps a little scandalises, more timid natures, The ordinary plodders on the well-worn path to Heaven are not prepared to find these Saints plunge into thickets and climb by unknown paths, and outstrip them by their very daring and their dominant individualism; they, to all appearance, take liberties with prescribed methods, show a fearlessness of the ordinary dangers that beset the spiritual life and exhibit a confidence in God that looks to timid eyes startlingly like presumption; yet somehow they come out right, they succeed where others fail, and leave the rest of the world far behind. Indeed not only are the lives of the Saints marked by this extraordinary variety and individualism, but the same virtues in different men are so markedly different that often we can scarcely recognise them as the same. The zeal of Saint Paul, in its inexhaustible energy, content with nothing short of the world as its sphere, and the zeal of Saint John, the great contemplative, seem scarcely to have one characteristic in common. It would be difficult to compare the humility of Saint Francis of Assisi with, say, the humility of Saint Ignatius of Loyola, each gives us his own revelation of the same virtue, stamped deeply with his own personality. Or compare again the Spirit of Prayer - the very source and fountain of all spiritual life - as portrayed by Saint John of the Cross and by the exercises of Saint Ignatius. Each draws with a master's hand, according to his own experience, his method of communing with God, and the most striking thing is their dissimilarity.

1. And yet, with all this freedom and individualism the lives of the Saints did not develop by haphazard efforts to be good. They were not the mere result of individual souls trying each in his own original way to draw near to God. As we get beneath the surface and examine their lives more carefully we shall find that they were each and all built upon and developed under a system of laws as truly as the organic world of life, What more varied, what more

apparently free than life? yet it grows, develops and matures by law, So does the spiritual life of the Saints, Law in the highest sense is not opposed to liberty, it is the principle upon which liberty is based. Saint James speaks of the Christian as being judged by "the perfect law of liberty". In proportion as we violate any of the laws of our physical, moral or intellectual nature we lose some of our freedom of action; in proportion as we know and obey their laws we are free. Perfect health, and vigour of mind and body depend upon perfect conformity to law And perfect spiritual liberty, the possession of the power of complete spiritual self-expression and action, depends upon perfect conformity to those laws upon which the spiritual life is based and by which it matures. The cramped and timid scrupulousness of many a Christian's life is the result of the lack of the knowledge of or obedience to these laws. "The Truth," in every sphere, "shall make you free." The wonderful largeness and daring, and, if I may say so, roominess, of the lives of the great Saints sprang from the elasticity and adaptableness of their individual characters when brought into complete response to the laws of the spiritual life. As the great musician handles his instrument with an ease and freedom that astonishes one less skilled.

And the laws of the spiritual life, like the laws of the physical life, are common to all. The infinite variety of character is, partly at least, the result of the difference of material and temperament upon which these laws are acting. Just as the same forces in Nature - light, heat, electricity - produce different effects upon different substances.

So in the spiritual life the fundamental laws are the same for all. If we could analyse the characters of those who have attained to the most different forms of sanctity, we should find notwithstanding their infinite variety that all were governed by the same principles, Take to pieces the most

varied and complicated forms of organic life, and we shall be able to trace the growth and structure of all of them to a few laws common to all. So we may trace to the operation of the same spiritual laws the sanctity and hiddenness of the cloistered contemplative, and the zeal of the missionary; the silence of the hermit, and the fervour that inspires the burning eloquence of the apostolic preacher. It was the same principle that drove Saint Anthony into the wilderness that sent Saint Francis into the towns and villages of Italy. Under the moulding power of the same law Saint Ignatius drilled and disciplined his great army of the Society of Jesus to deal with the cultured world of his day, and Saint Theresa drew her daughters out of the world and placed them behind grills and barriers to plead for the world they left, and to do penance for it in a life hidden with Christ in God, Saint Francis Xavier in a life of unwearied activity preaching to the heathen, and Saint John of the Cross, or Saint Peter of Alcantara, shutting themselves out from the world in a life of mystic contemplation, were very different types of men in many ways, and very different in the circumstances of their lives, yet they were the product of the self-same laws.

Many no doubt have grown in holiness without any technical or scientific knowledge of these laws, For as all the forces of Nature run up into and are the expression of the Will of God - "Creation's secret force Himself unmoved all motion's source" - so do all the laws of the spiritual life run into one great force - the love of God - the love of the Law-Giver. As our Lord summed up the Decalogue - in the love of God, "and that which is like unto it," the love of man, So, many a humble and unlettered Saint has instinctively and almost unconsciously learnt, in the absorbing passion of his love to God, to conform himself to those laws of the spiritual life which he could not define or analyse. He simply followed as the love of God led him. Yet if we could analyse his life and the method by which the virtues that adorn his character

have matured and ripened, we could trace them to the action of those laws which are common to all.

It is, I think, a great help to remember this. To remember that the spiritual life is not an exceptional department of life, dependent largely upon emotion and largely upon circumstances over which we have no control. But that it is a *life*, possessed by us all, growing and developing under laws which are made known to us, to which, if we will conform, the result must be attained. If each of us had to strive on in his own way, and perhaps as none ever strove before; if holiness were a purely individual thing, and depended upon wild and random efforts to control ourselves and to draw near to God, we might well despair. But if, as is undoubtedly true, order reigns amidst all the variety of the spiritual world, if the spiritual life depends upon conformity to certain laws, and we have not to discover these laws for ourselves, but they are revealed to us, so that we know them with an absolute certainty, a certainty if possible more assured than that of the physical world around us, inasmuch as they are revealed to us by God Himself, then we have but to place ourselves under obedience to these laws and to bring our life into conformity with them, and holiness is assured and certain.

Let us once grasp this and it changes the whole aspect of life, It makes it possible for all, What an encouragement to one wearied out with vain efforts that seem to bring him no nearer to God or to give him more power over himself, to be told that there is a way which leads to life; that there are laws by obeying which he will grow in holiness, and that his failure springs from ignorance of, or lack of submission to, these laws.

And these laws our Lord has given us in the opening verses of the Sermon on the Mount. He has there analysed in

advance the Christian life of perfection and disclosed to us the laws that govern it. He tells us the secret of Beatitude. If we would gain the Beatitude we must place ourselves under the law that develops it. Let the law work itself out and the blessing must follow.

Every rule therefore of self-discipline and prayer which individuals make for themselves should have some relation to these laws, they should have as their object the bringing of oneself more entirely under their control, that they may work themselves into one's whole nature. The law of poverty of spirit is the key-note of the spiritual life. It is the first step that the soul must take if it would enter upon the path that leads to the blessings promised by our Lord. But each person must bring himself under obedience to the law in his own way. What would help one would not necessarily help another. For temperament, circumstances, education and many other things must be taken into consideration, and so with the rest.

But the great thing is to have the law clearly before one. To know what one is aiming at, and the result that is to be expected. If a man knows that undue attachment to created things clouds the vision of the Kingdom of Heaven, and that poverty of spirit, the keeping oneself free and allowing none of these things to master him is the condition of possessing it, then he knows what he is to aim at. The issue is clear. He is not fighting as one that beats the air, but his energies are concentrated and the struggle is definite. He must be left to carry out the struggle in his own way. There are no prescribed rules. There is no straight road upon which all the world can walk to Heaven. There is in all the teaching of our Lord a singular absence of detail - great principles are laid down, but each has to work them out for himself. But it is all-important that those who are striving should have very definitely before them what it is they are striving for. And

the Beatitudes considered as the laws of perfection reveal this and make both the end, and the means of attaining the end, quite clear. A harsh asceticism may end in stripping one of everything in this world and giving nothing in its place, but an asceticism that has as its end the possession of heavenly riches can be neither harsh nor fruitless. Self-repression, self-effacement, self-distrust, practised for no definite end, or on the general principle that one ought to annihilate oneself, often ends in making a person feeble and characterless and one that is generally and rightly annihilated by those around him; but that self-conquest fought for in the name of meekness makes one strong and gives as its reward the possession of the earth. Mourning for mourning's sake and with the fundamentally false idea that God Almighty is more pleased with us when we are sad than when we are glad produces the grumbler, the cynic and the pessimist, but the mourning that looks for and will be satisfied with nothing but the Divine Comforter takes all the bitterness and gloom out of sorrow - and so on.

In the one case men do not see what they are striving for, the heart, the life, the inspiring force is wanting, in the other case the struggle is for a definite end and prosecuted with unflinching purpose. The law under which they would place themselves stands clearly defined before their eyes.

But so strong and so potent a factor in the struggle is individual character and temperament that every man engaged in the conflict may be fighting in a different way for the same end, sometimes in ways that seem opposite.

For instance, one who is naturally hard and stern and takes a certain pleasure in dealing cruelly with himself, will soon learn that if he is to gain the blessing of the poor in spirit he must become gentle; that Heaven does not open its doors to those who hate, even if the hatred be only directed against

themselves or the material things of God's creation. He must learn to deny himself for love, not hatred, and the effort to place himself under the law of poverty gradually but surely eliminates every remnant of harshness from his nature.

On the other hand, one who is by nature soft and self-indulgent will find that he must brace himself and learn to be stern and unyielding with himself in the school of poverty. Thus two men striving for the same virtue and with the same ideal before them strive in directly opposite ways. But each knows what his aim is, and so he makes his own rules, and practises with a view to that end.

Thus the Beatitudes keep before us the principles that are to rule our lives if we would follow the example of our Lord. If ye would be perfect, said Christ, follow Me, and if we would follow Him it must be not by a mere copying of His words and acts, but by ruling ourselves by the inner principles which governed His life.

2. But again, the Beatitudes, it will be noticed, say nothing about sin. They command us rather to aim at virtue. There is a vast difference between doing right and not doing wrong. A person may not do anything very wrong and may nevertheless be quite colourless and characterless. Indeed it is possible that to do what is definitely sinful may need more character than simply not to do wrong. Goodness is not a negative but an intensely positive thing. It is energetic, active, strong. The very word virtue implies effort. Effort of the most constant and strenuous kind. There are no such things as negative virtues, The powers of our mind and body were not given us that we might simply keep them from mischief and hold them in check so that they should not harm ourselves or others. They were all given us for action. The tongue to speak, the eye to look, the hand to work, the heart to love, the mind to think, the will to choose.

Everything about us speaks of an output of power. Life is to flow forth through mind and body. The body is the machinery through which the inner force is to express itself, The most mortified life is not a passive life. It is rather one in which the whole nature has been brought under the control of the will, and the will under obedience to God. It is the life of one who has died to sin that he might live to righteousness, It is the Resurrection life, a life in which all our powers are used for the very highest purposes.

Mortification is a dying that we may live; a refraining from evil that we may do good. To die to evil is indeed so far as it goes good, but if there be no new direction into which the energy of life is turned, it is to be feared that the evil will soon regain control. The unclean spirit that is cast out of a man waits till he finds the house of the soul empty, and then "he goeth and taketh to him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first". The effort merely not to do wrong may, and often does, lead to greater sin. The listless, uninterested and unoccupied life is the most dangerous of all. It is better to be interested in frivolities than to be interested in nothing. Life is too strong merely to be held in check. For life is movement, and movement implies direction, and the moving stream that is simply held back will soon sweep away the barriers that restrain it with a mad and reckless torrent.

Therefore the only remedy against doing evil is to do good. To use the gifts we have in the service of God, to overcome vice by virtue. There is in fact no intermediate state of inactivity in which having driven away evil we rest, before employing ourselves in doing good. Disease will only be overcome by health, light by darkness, The mind is won from wrong thoughts by right thoughts, the heart from the love of evil by learning to love good. The current of life cannot be stopped, it can but be directed into another channel.

And thus the Beatitudes say nothing about sin, but they imply a great deal, for they are addressed to sinners, yet only speak of virtue. They bid the followers of Christ overcome evil by good. The lover of the world is to overcome the world by gaining possession of a better world. The man who would gain power by self-assertion, is to gain a better power by meekness, The man of sorrows is not to sink into melancholy but to seek the consolation of the Divine Comforter.

They all speak of a vivid, active, intense life, a clearly defined and positive aim, a turning from evil to do good, a search for happiness in right which wrong has failed to give. They utter no blessing upon negativeness. Even the mortification and self-discipline that they involve is lost sight of in the brilliant light of the Beatitude which they promise. As Saint Paul says of our Lord, "For the joy that was set before Him, He endured the cross".

3. But again, this positive principle reaches further. It declares to us that each of these virtues has behind it a definite spiritual consolation which the virtue itself brings to the soul. As the virtue is developed it suffuses the soul with the glow of its Beatitude. In proportion as you have the spirit of poverty Heaven will lie open to you. Meekness will put you in possession of the earth from which you have turned away. Mourning gains for you heavenly comfort. The virtue is the channel through which these blessings flow in upon the soul.

We have the right therefore to look for these rewards of virtue, We are not to fight our way through the trials and temptations of earth, strengthened to endure them only by the thought that we shall soon be done with them and the reward of Heaven will then be ours. No, we are to strive for these virtues with the assurance that they will bring us their

own special rewards here on earth. As the virtue is formed it fills the soul with the sweet perfume of its blessing. In the natural order even, virtue is its own reward; that is to say in proportion as one is true to the order of nature one gains the blessing which order brings. The man who is just, prudent, temperate, will be a happier man than he who is not. But he who is living according to the principles of the supernatural order, finds amidst his struggles here on earth and his sufferings the rewards of Heaven.

There is a natural purity that brings tranquility of mind and clearness of thought and a deepening of affection, and there is a purity of another order that gives to the soul the vision of God. There is a poverty that gives a man power over himself and over others, the poverty of the man who for the sake of gaining strength diminishes his outward wants to the fewest possible, but there is a poverty that opens Heaven to man. But as the virtues inculcated by the Beatitudes are all supernatural, so are the blessings which they bring. As the soul therefore rises under the action of grace and prayer and develops those virtues which belong to the supernatural order, it will find that it has already attained a reward which is not of earth.

Such a view of the happiness of the Christian life is very different from, and far more inspiring than, that which comes from the mere sense of duty which has been the sole principle that has ruled many. There are not a few who act and speak as if the pleasant things were always wrong and the unpleasant things mostly right, who feel it a reason sufficient in itself for not doing a thing that they like it. Before their eyes there ever stretches the dreary and barren road of duty, encircled on all sides by the rich and fair pastures that are forbidden. As soon even as a duty becomes a pleasure they feel that it has begun to lose its value. Such is not the teaching of our Lord in the Beatitudes. He would

have men realize that the pathway of virtue is rich with happiness, that the struggle after the virtues which He commands is the struggle after the truest, highest and most enduring form of happiness, Each virtue gained makes the Heaven of eternity more real by giving to the soul some new foretaste of the joys of Heaven here on earth.

It is then no stern stoic view of duty that inspires the man who aims after Christian perfection, but the vision of the supernatural, rising before his eyes; gifts of the supernatural endowing him with substantial blessings, There is a joy that is ever closely followed by the dark shadow of regret, and there is a sorrow that wakens the soul first to the possibility and then to the reality of Divine consolation. Men can face that sorrow with calmness as they enter beneath its shadow if they have the certainty that in its gloom they shall have the sweetest of all comforts. There is a self-assertion that, inconsiderate of the claims of others, pushes out of its path all that comes in its way and gains its end to find itself alone and dissatisfied; and there is a gentleness that ever considers the claims of others more than its own, and ends by gaining all and more than all that it gave up, even the possession of the earth, while it is refreshed with the abundance of peace.

The Beatitudes thus disclose to us the blessings that lie hidden in the rugged pathway of virtue, and bid us boldly and gladly face difficulties for the joy that lies before us. It is no stern and gloomy religion that our Lord teaches, but one full of present consolations and capable of kindling the noblest enthusiasm. The Christian whose life is all sadness, and whose only hope lies beyond the grave, may then be sure that there is something amiss in his life or in his method. We know upon the highest authority that though the demands upon the soul are great and ever increasing, yet that the blessings even in this life are still greater.

Indeed we may go further, we may test the reality of the virtue by the reality of the blessing. If we have none of the rewards of the Beatitudes it is because we have not the virtues which they command. We are as little capable of having the blessings without the virtues as we are of having the virtues without the blessings, They are inseparably linked together. Therefore, however poor in spirit, if our poverty merely shuts out the comforts of earth and does not open to us any of the joys of Heaven, we may be sure it is not the poverty of which the Beatitude speaks. So if our mourning leaves our heart in gloom and despondency it is not the mourning of the Beatitude. As well might the student persuade himself that study which never brings the reward of increased knowledge or power of thought is real study. On the contrary, the student in entering upon his studies knows well that the goal towards which he aims is knowledge, and that every step of his path is blessed by an opening of the mind and some fresh increase of knowledge that stimulates and inspires him.

So must the Christian, in the school of perfection, have true foretastes of the Heaven which is his aim in the blessings which flow out upon him in the acquisition of each virtue which fits him for it. The old law pointed out the curse of sin, the new law points out the blessings of virtue. The old law blocked the road to sin by a threat, the new law opens the door to virtue with a blessing. There are passions and inclinations in man's nature that when gratified bring a moment's thrill of pleasure, followed by an ever deepening misery. The old Law set up fences against the outgoing of life in these directions, and upon these fences wrote stern prohibitions, and a warning that all such indulgences would meet with a curse. There are aspirations in man's nature after aims far beyond its reach, there are ideals that haunt the mind of possibilities that experience seems to prove to be impossible - the Beatitudes point the way to the

realization of these ideals, They mark clearly and definitely the road that must be trodden, and the entrance to that road being narrow and painful, and since human nature shrinks at the cost which it demands, upon these sign-posts are written the promises of many blessings. Men could to a certain extent find out for themselves the curse and misery of sin, but it needed Revelation to show it in its fulness, and it needed the sanctions of the law to warn men when Nature would seek a wrong outlet for its enjoyment. So men could find out for themselves that virtue in the long run brings more lasting happiness than vice, but it needed the clear voice of Revelation, amidst the seductions of temptation, to substantiate and quicken this instinct, and it needed the Finger of God to point out clearly the pathway of perfection which men could not find out for themselves. In a world in which riches is an almost unfailing source of power and an almost universal object of adulation, it needs something more than a possibility or a guess to induce a man to turn his back upon it all and to assure him, and himself to believe, that happiness lies in exactly the opposite direction. Yet this the Christian can do. He can do it with a certainty that is free from a doubt or a hesitation. He knows it upon the authority of God, and that authority, if he needs anything more, has been tested and proved by a long line of witnesses. He can tread the hard and barren road of self-denial and poverty when as yet no faintest sign of that other Kingdom towards which he has turned his gaze is to be seen upon the horizon, with calmness and certainty, He can strip himself of all the world holds most worth possessing while as yet he sees nothing of these other riches which faith tells him are more true and lasting, and face the barrenness that surrounds him, saying to himself, "I do not *hope*, I *know* that I am on the road to true happiness". He does not look with the eye of envy upon the wealth that others possess. He willingly and deliberately abandons all prospect of such possessions. The path upon which he has set out is clear and

well defined, hard beaten with the footprints of a vast multitude, not one of whom has ever found that he was misled.

So it is with each of the Beatitudes. They are the doors thrown open by the Hand of our Lord for men to walk forth in life upon the true road to happiness upon which lurk no deceptions, and in the hearts of those who pass through these doors there are no doubts, no fears of deception. They cannot be deceived. The sign-posts which guide them at every turn are written by the Finger of God; others are deceived. Many who have believed they could find happiness in the attainment of wealth, or the satisfaction of their ambitions, or in the joys of the domestic life, have in the end missed their aim, and even though they may have gained what they set before them they have found in it only restlessness and dissatisfaction. But those who have ruled their lives by the laws of the Beatitudes, have been guided by One who has never yet misled any one who has submitted his life to that divinely revealed rule.

To many at first sight it seems as if it were contrary to nature. Poverty, mourning, meekness, persecution. But he who tries it will find that though it is above the power of unaided nature, it is not contrary to but in strict conformity to nature. It ennobles, enriches, sanctifies, perfects our nature. For nature cannot find its final satisfaction in the things of earth. The Beatitudes lift man up to God and then force him to turn back again to the world from whose fascination and power he is set free, to help it and to bless it. They are the laws of life, not of a solitary ascetic living as a hermit who, if such a thing were possible, seeks his own sanctification regardless of the welfare of his brethren. No, they are the laws of life, of men who live and move and have their being amongst their fellow-creatures, who make the world the better and men the happier by their existence,

who cannot ignore or forget others, who having found the key to happiness for themselves have found it for others also. The men who are fittest to live. The best type of men in every sense of the word and in every relation of life. The men who see time in the perspective of eternity, who see the creatures in the light of the Creator, who having gained complete mastery over themselves can be misled by no false ambition, who having faced sorrow and suffering have learned the true secret of courage and the true source of consolation, who possess the earth, not through self-assertion but by meekness, who in the vision of God are proof against the delusions and fascinations of the senses, who never intrude themselves in the way of others, nor cross their ambitions, nor stimulate their envy, but go about through a world of strife and selfishness as peacemakers, Place such men in any position and they are above reproach or suspicion. They will ever be the strongest, the most fearless, the possessors of the truest liberty. Their nature set free from mere temporal interests and ambitions, devoid of selfishness, purified from the taint of sensuality, uplifted above the world, so as to take the largest and highest views of all things, is fittest to do the work of life in the best and noblest way. These are the men formed by the laws of the Beatitudes. They have found the key to true happiness, and they are a blessing to the world in which they live.

Blessed are the Poor in Spirit, for Theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven

The first law of the spiritual life has to do with man's relation to the manifold things with which he is daily in contact in the world around him. No sooner does consciousness awaken than he finds the outside world touching, pressing upon him, appealing to him in a thousand ways. He stands in the midst of a world created for him, supplied with infinite resources and capable of being put to various uses. He finds this world a captivating and alluring mystery, studying it, questioning it. From the very first it exercises a fascination upon him from which it is impossible to escape if he would. It has secrets to disclose that he longs to discover, mysteries that he cannot rest till he solves. It sets his mind and heart and will at work. It allures him on with ever-increasing hope of understanding it better, keeps him waiting long for an answer to his questions, teaches him patience, self-control, humility. Sometimes it opens its lips to speak, and with beating pulses he listens and is greeted with mocking silence; sometimes in a moment it flashes upon his mind a light that reveals secrets he has been waiting for years to learn.



To some all Nature appears but the thinnest veil through which a mysterious Presence can be felt and almost seen, a vestment that clothes, half-revealing, half-concealing, a great Personality. A mind pierces through its marvellous mechanism, arresting the intellect, and calling it into close communion; a heart throbs through it that sets the hearts of

men vibrating in response. To others it is but a vast and complicated machinery, governed by changeless laws, self-acting, self-evolving; nothing stands behind, nothing at least that the human mind is capable of knowing anything about. It presents riddles which men must set themselves to solve, it is capable of being understood and used in the service of man, who, though evolved by the mechanical working of its laws and forces, and shaped and moulded by the things around him, and but the creature of yesterday, believes he is capable not only of understanding it, but of ruling it and using it in his service,

But whatever our theories, no sooner does man awaken to the existence of the world around him than he quickly learns what an influence it has upon him for good or evil, that all these material things affect him in a most remarkable way, that in fighting them he grows strong, in studying them he grows wise, in conquering them he gains victory over himself, That not only does the development of his mind to a large extent depend upon them, but what is more strange, the formation of his character. Naked indeed he comes from his mother's womb, and naked he returns, but not as he came. He leaves the world, bearing upon himself eternally the marks of his conflict with, or his yielding to, the influence of the material things with which he had to do during his sojourn upon earth.

The sight of and contact with these things excites our minds and hearts, forces us to think about them, study and use them, and they leave the whole person stamped with the effect of their influence.

The history of civilization has two sides, It tells us of development and progress in many things, of the steady growth in the knowledge of Nature and her laws; of late years it records victory after victory in the sphere of physical

science that has well-nigh turned men's heads and made them believe that almost anything is possible. It shows how every new discovery is put at the service of man to make the wheels of life run more smoothly. It discloses the power of the human mind and will, seizing upon the most destructive forces of Nature and making them the kindly ministers of his service. We who look on, and into whose hands these gifts are so generously poured, do not know whether to wonder most at the greatness of the gifts, or the energy and mental vigour, the unwearied patience and perseverance of the men who discover them, and prepare them for our use. Certainly the study of the sciences has developed the mind, and up to a certain point the characters of the men who have given themselves to these studies and have enriched the world by their gifts.

But there is another side to the history of civilization. It is undoubtedly true that in every victory which has been won over Nature men run the risk of a more serious defeat. The intellectual victory of one man leads to the danger, to say the least, of a moral weakening of many. For every new discovery, every new convenience, tends to make life more luxurious and to bind men more and more under the influence of material things, and these things tend to waken and supply new and often artificial wants. The child of modern civilization looks back upon a civilization that is past and wonders that men could have lived in such poverty and such meagre surroundings. Certainly if we are made for eternity and man's true end is the knowledge and love of God, the fewer our material wants and the more spiritual our life the better. And we know how the flesh with its clamorous demands, and the spirit with its lofty aims, are ever in conflict one with the other, and that the more we give to the flesh, the less vigorous the spirit is likely to be; and thus as the discoveries of science tend to make life more luxurious and more easy, there is the danger of its deadening

influence upon men as spiritual beings, who are to live on earth as strangers and pilgrims, journeying to that City which hath foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God.

Following therefore upon the victories of modern civilization there treads an enemy more dangerous than any that has been overcome, who by awakening and satisfying our material wants binds us to the earth. For we scarcely realize how wealth and luxury and ease rob us of our truest liberty and enslave us to material things. In one way the modern world is greater than the ancient world, the poorest have a knowledge of Nature and a power of drawing upon her exhaustless resources that the old world never dreamed of, but with all this, the modern world has needs and requirements of which our forefathers knew nothing. Our nature is bound by a multitude of bonds which every new discovery supplies. The men of the past trod the earth with a freer step, their wants were fewer, they were less entangled in material things. We talk much of our mastery over Nature, how we conquer and bind her forces to do us service, but there is another and a greater victory, the victory which reduces material wants to a minimum and leaves the heart and mind free for higher things. It was a great victory, as it has been well said, which encircled the world with the telegraph wires, and almost annihilated space and time, but who can doubt that it is a greater victory which enables a man to bear with fortitude and calmness the message borne by those wires which tells him he has lost everything that the world had to give him.

The problem therefore becomes a serious one. Is an increase of scientific knowledge, leading as it inevitably does to an increase of luxury, and consequently entangling men more and more in material things, an evil? If science is the handmaid of civilization, and civilization means, at any rate on one side, a development of material comforts, is it a thing

to be discouraged by devout Christians? Shall we boldly say, "the fewer our needs the better, the freer from the world the better, the more we look upon this earth as the place of our pilgrimage, and remember that it is not our home, but that our home lies beyond, the more we shall resemble Him who said, 'The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His Head,' and therefore let us discourage in every way that kind of knowledge which tends to make life on earth more luxurious and to entangle men in its snares".

We know well enough that this is no merely speculative consideration, it is one that presses upon every thoughtful Christian with increasing insistence under the perplexing conditions of modern life. Undoubtedly work, study, the struggle with Nature, develops the mind, hardens the muscles, and produces many excellent moral results in the men who so use their powers; yet the fruits of all this labour, thought and struggle is undeniably materializing. I am discontented today with the discomforts of travel which a few years ago I should have thought luxurious. I can't get on out of reach of telegraph and telephone of which our grandfathers knew nothing; a few years' residence amidst the manifold conveniences of a great town utterly unfits me for living in the country, Every year some new discovery shows me the possibility of making life more comfortable and makes me impatient of its discomforts. Have I then the right to make use of all these things, having before me the example and teaching of our Lord? or should I, as one who desires to follow in the footsteps of Him who said "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his Cross and follow Me," set them all aside, and discourage that kind of thought and study which produces them?

Certainly God gave us our minds to use, and He gave us the earth to subdue and conquer, yet the inevitable result of the

use of our minds in this direction seems to be that it makes it more difficult, if not impossible, to follow closely in the footsteps of our Lord. It becomes therefore a serious question for the thoughtful Christian what is to be his attitude personally and intellectually towards a great deal of what comes under the head of modern civilization.

He seems to be placed in a difficulty whatever position he takes. For if he sets himself in opposition to modern thought and development he is told that he is simply opposing the use of those powers of mind and observation which God has given us, which cannot be justified, If on the other hand he upholds it, he seems to be giving his support to a system which has proved itself to be the greatest power for blinding men's eyes to spiritual things and making them earthly and material.

How then is he to bear himself amidst the increasing luxury of the age in which he lives?

Now it would of course be very easy to answer to a person who put such a question, "If you feel that these things are injurious to your spiritual life, and that your conscience warns you against them, then you certainly ought to avoid them, but there are others who do not feel as you do. It is a matter for each individual to decide for himself. What is a luxury and a danger to one is neither a luxury nor a danger to another; you must not judge others by your own standards."

But such an answer is only a shirking of the real difficulty. It is undoubtedly true that many individuals are called to live more strict and self-denying lives than others, and that some are called to "go, sell all that they have," and follow literally in the footsteps of our Lord, But the question is not primarily one of individual vocation. It is, "What is to be the attitude

of Christians generally towards a system that undoubtedly tends to make life luxurious? Is it to be one of protest or of sympathy?"

If, for instance, I say broadly, the whole structure of modern civilization is in direct opposition to the teaching of our Lord, and every man who desires to live a Christian life has only one course possible, that is, to keep himself free from the luxuries which it accumulates round him, and let his life be a protest against them. Then the answer is obvious. 'Are we then not to use our minds, not to seek to discover what Nature has to give us, or if we do, are we not to make use of our discovery? Does Christianity forbid us to use the mental gifts which God has given us, and command, in many departments, life to stand still?' Such a question has only to be put to be answered in the negative.

On the other hand, if the necessity of our position obliges us to look forward to the wheels of life running ever more and more smoothly, and if we are assured that every fresh discovery is almost certain to be a new source of comfort and luxury, is the Christian, therefore, to take all these good things like every one else and to oil the wheels and pad the carriages that bear him along life's road, without doubt or fear? And if this be true, what becomes of such sayings of our Lord as, "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his Cross and follow Me". "Every one that hath left houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, for My name's sake, shall receive an hundred-fold, and shall possess life everlasting."

Now the answer which is to guide the Christian's life makes, as Christianity always does, high demands upon those who would be guided by it. And it is an answer which goes to the root of the difficulty, and is applicable not merely to individuals but to all. And it certainly does not involve its

followers in a position which forbids them to use to the utmost the powers of mind which God has given them, nor on the other hand does it ignore but keeps to the front the fact that the fundamental idea of the Christian life and character is that of self-sacrifice and unworldliness.

But be it remembered that the religion of Christ has to do with *men* and the formation of character, and that it deals with *things* only in so far as they affect character. In other words, it lays down man's proper relation to things. It condemns nothing. "All things are good if they are received with the Word of God, and with prayer." It declares that "God saw all that He had made, and behold it was very good". It protests against the Manichean idea that there is inherent evil in anything, or that there is anything upon the face of this earth that God has not created.

Yet there is always a tendency in the human mind to condemn as evil those things which have ministered to man's evil passions, as if the evil were in the thing rather than the person. But the morality lies not in the thing, but in the man. Many things are so associated with evil, and almost only with evil, that they seem to exhale an evil atmosphere which contaminates those who touch them. One can readily imagine that the cards or dice which have been the means of ruining a man's character and property, might be regarded by him as things bad in themselves and to be universally condemned, yet they are as harmless as those which have given an hour's rest and pleasure to a hard-working man. It is easy to see how stimulants and narcotics which have been so abused as to be the curse and ruin of the lives of vast multitudes should become so associated with moral ruin and sin in the minds of those who have suffered from them that a certain moral character is attributed to them. Yet these same things when used properly have been the means of saving health and life. It is

so easy and so much more satisfactory to our pride to transfer the source of evil from ourselves to things outside of us; to say we were defiled, instead of, what is nearer the truth, we ourselves defiled what was otherwise clean. For the things that have been the instruments of untold evil are nevertheless in themselves good. The fact that they have been abused by bad or weak men is no reason why they should not be used by good men.

Yet how often do we hear sweeping condemnations uttered by men against some good gifts of God, because in their undisciplined hands they have proved a cause of grievous sin, and strong words of protest against those who use them with moderation. It is not uncommon to hear from those who take up a crusade against some great evil, such as intemperance, language that is altogether unjustifiable, not infrequently unchristian. The Church has often been accused of being lukewarm and backward in the part she takes in such movements, because She cannot go to these extremes. She cannot condemn as evil any of God's creatures, however carefully their use may need to be guarded. It is not from lack of zeal but from reverence for the truth. Her language must always be that of moderation in contrast to the extremes to which many are led by their enthusiasm for a cause; and in the long run her attitude will be justified. It is not the part of wisdom to destroy evil at the expense of truth. Evil can only be overcome by truth.

So in many other cases the attitude of the Church has been misunderstood where she endeavours to preserve that moderation which is necessary in preserving the balance between two truths that may seem at first sight to be in conflict.

By the honour which she has always paid to the state of holy virginity she has been accused of slighting the married

state, yet she alone amongst all Christian people has upheld in its fulness the dignity and indissolubility of marriage as a sacrament. She cannot exaggerate the dignity and sacredness of the married state at the expense of the other, nor in the exalted language which she uses of those who for the love of Christ give up all, does she cast any slight upon that which she calls the holy estate of matrimony.

So, again, she has always condemned the principles of socialism and maintained the rights of possession, and yet she honours with special reverence the state of holy poverty.

It is this perfect balance of mind, and this justice in maintaining to the full truths that may seem opposed, which has so often exposed her to the charge of lukewarmness on the part of those fiery enthusiasts which in their zeal press one truth to the practical denial of another. Money has been, as Saint James says, "a root of all evil". It has fed every worst passion in the human heart, it has been the means of breaking the closest ties of friendship and of blood, it has hardened men's hearts till they have almost ceased to be human. Yet money has been the instrument of untold acts of kindness and charity. The Church gives her blessing and protects the rights both of those who keep it and of those who for the love of Christ forsake all that they have. The thing itself is unmoral. It can become alike the instrument of good or evil in the hands of those who possess it. And thus the manifold fruits of civilization and of luxury which many gather around them, till every higher aspiration of the soul is stupefied and deadened and the light of heaven is clouded; such things are not in themselves to be condemned as evil, they are God's good gifts and are capable of being used in His service, and as the instruments of charity and kindness.

It is not therefore by the condemnation of any of these things, or by attributing to them in themselves any moral

value, that the Church of Christ would lead men in the way of perfection. It is rather by pointing out man's true relationship to them, and teaching him that all depends upon this - that there is scarcely any of God's creatures from which he cannot gain harm, and not one from which he cannot acquire some good; that the good or evil lies not in the thing itself, but in him, and in his use or abuse of it.

In one word, she teaches that man is made for God, and that all created things are given him as means to lead him to God. In so far as they are used as means to this end they help him on, in so far as they are used as an end in themselves they hold him back and come between him and God. All sin can be defined in the language of Saint Paul as "the love of the creature more than the Creator". The entanglement of the heart in created things.

There is scarcely anything on the face of the earth that cannot be abused and become a snare. There is nothing through which the eye of faith cannot see some faint revelation of the power and wisdom and beauty of the Creator. We are the centre of many wants. A fierce fire of desire burns in the depths of every soul. We find scattered around us by the bountiful hand of God multitudes of things ready to our hand. Many of these things we cannot do without. Even those who reduce their needs to a minimum require many things - the food they eat, the clothes they wear, the houses they dwell in. And every one of these things can be used as means to fit a man to do his work and serve God, or merely for the pleasure they give in the using, till, for the enjoyment of that pleasure, they are sought after more and more and become a means of enjoyment - an end in themselves, and cease to have any relationship to God. And thus God is lost sight of in the creatures which He designed as His messengers to call men to Him.

Thus all that modern life puts at our disposal is, in itself, essentially neither good nor bad. Everything depends upon the way in which each individual uses it. The comforts and luxuries that we are accustomed to, and all that makes the wheels of life run smoother, do, no doubt, tend to make the multitudes who use these things without a thought of God more materialistic and earthly. But the same multitude, in other less luxurious ages, drifted away from God under the influences that were around them at the time, making them savage and cruel. If the heart be not anchored in God it will be drawn hither and thither by the currents in which it finds itself, whether these currents swamp them in material comforts or in brutal and savage passions. It is not by change of surroundings that men are brought to God, but by a change of heart. Prohibitive legislation will never Christianize men. A man who wants to get drunk will not *necessarily* be one whit a better man because the law has forbidden the use of alcohol in the place where he lives. If his passion be not put under restraint it will break out in another direction.

And men who crave for comforts and ease may be none the less material and earthly in their hearts because they cannot get them. The tramp, sleeping away his day under a haystack and living from hand to mouth upon what he can get, rather than work, differs little in his heart from the millionaire who lives for and loves the luxuries his money enables him to procure. The characters are pretty much alike, the difference lies merely in the accident of circumstances.

It is not necessarily the luxuries that make men luxurious, but the earthly undisciplined heart that loves and craves for ease and seizes upon all that ministers to it. Whether or to what extent these things can be had, is but an accident.

People often talk as if the poor, because they are poor, are unworldly, and the rich, because they are rich, are worldly. But such generalizations do not work out in fact. There are many amongst the poor whose hearts are filled with rage and bitterness against the rich and harrowed with discontent against their lot, and there are amongst the richest, hearts that sit very loose to their possessions and only long for the riches of God.

Therefore accepting things as they are, nay, more, rejoicing in every fresh discovery and every new development of life as God's good gifts to man, the devout Christian knows that for him all depends upon his using every new thing that is placed at his disposal in the right way, as a means to an end, not as an end in itself, These things that naturally tend to entangle the soul and to press in between it and God if used carelessly can be, and as a matter of fact are, used by multitudes as a means of approach to God and as instruments in His service, and are received with thankfulness and prayer.

But no one can rise through the creatures to the Creator without effort on his part and the help of God Himself, Yet the difficulty lies within not without, in the heart and will, not in the external objects, He who is not struggling with himself and seeking the Divine assistance by prayer and sacraments will find it no easier to be spiritual in the barrenness of a desert than amidst all the luxuries of a most luxurious age. The difficulties would no doubt be of a different kind, but the results, so far as the spiritual life is concerned, would be very much the same.

The first consideration, therefore, for any man who would order his life according to the Will of God, must be his attitude towards all these things that crowd and press upon him and tend to cloy and deaden the soul. And that attitude

is clearly defined. It is laid down as the first Law of the spiritual life given by our Lord - "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven".

The Beatitude, be it observed, is not here upon the state of poverty as opposed to the state of riches. It is upon the poor in spirit. It is offered to all alike, the richest as well as the poorest. The attitude is one of freedom and inner independence. The man who has little of this world's goods needs to put himself under the Law of the Beatitude as truly as the man who has much. He must keep his heart free from being dominated by the desire for possession. After all, the sphere touches the earth only on one point, but its whole weight presses and rests upon it as truly as some other thing which rests upon a wider base. Because a man has not much, it does not follow that he does not lavish his whole nature upon what he has just as much, perhaps even more, than one who possesses many things.

And the rich man must keep his riches in their place. He must not allow them to master him, or to sink under their spell. He must learn at once their danger and their value, and discipline himself till he has got to estimate them at their true worth.

Such an attitude of the soul towards the things of this world involves a constant vigilance, a ceaseless struggle with oneself, an insight that can only be gained by faith and preserved only by an unfailing fidelity to God. As our servants all these things are good and useful, as our masters they are tyrants.

For, through the fall, the mind of man has become clouded, and the things of earth have, as it were, become opaque; we see their beauty not as a transparency through which the Mind of God is reflected, but as things beautiful in

themselves. And our nature has lost its balance and leans earthward. It is only as we regain by faith an insight into the reality of things, and, as we regain our balance by a constant struggle with ourselves, that we are able to use all things, as spiritual beings whose destiny is to rise through the creatures to the Creator.

The first Beatitude then is the first Law of the spiritual life, and sets man in his right position towards all things around him. It discloses to him the fact that the danger lies in himself, not in things around him, That all things are good, but that they can easily be abused and become the source of evil to him.

It legislates for no one age and no one set of circumstances. It applies no more to those living in the time of our Lord than to those living in the more complicated conditions of our own time. It condemns nothing. It forbids nothing. It does not look askance at those things which minister to the most luxurious lives, nor at those things which have been to many the occasion of sin and ruin. It looks out upon the fair world and repeats the words that were uttered ere man came to spoil the beauty of God's work. "God saw all that He had made, and behold it was very good." It points man inward, and bids him become master of himself, and all things around him will fall into their place and serve him as he journeys Heavenward, "All things work together unto good to those who love God." Creation recognizes and obeys its master, when its master is at one with himself and its Creator.

It would be comparatively easy if the use or possession of certain things were forbidden to those who would follow the example of our Lord, but men, as experience shows, would soon find some way of compensating themselves for foregoing the use of what was prohibited, and they would,

moreover, be misled as to the real source of the evil and suppose that it lay without rather than within.

Thus man is placed, by the Beatitude, free in the midst of God's creation, to have and to use what he will; all things are given him for his service, but he is warned of his danger, He must be the master of all, the servant of nothing.

And the Beatitude is a personal one. Each man knows where his danger lies, and what his struggle must be. The same thing may be a source of danger to one and of help to another. The moment any one finds that he is depending too much upon any created thing, the Law of the Beatitude bids him struggle with himself to keep it in its place.

It would be a strange and interesting revelation of character if we could see into the lives of those around us, and learn what it is that has constituted their life struggle, the chief source of their discipline or failure.

Some of us could look with calm indifference, or perhaps contempt, upon that which stirred the deepest passions in another and clouded a brilliant intellect, and swayed and bent a strong will into a degrading slavery.

It is hard to imagine that a thing which we use when needed, and think no more about, makes the head of some strong man swim and his pulses beat, so that he cannot even think of it with calmness or reason. But so it is, We all have a bent towards something here on earth that tends to gain stronger and stronger control over us, "till for its sake alone we live and move," and are ready to sacrifice God, Heaven, eternity, place, power, influence, human affection, life itself.

We can perhaps look back into the past and see how some such things came into our lives and began to claim more

and more of our thoughts, to stir our passions and kindle our hearts, till we felt we must fight them or become their slaves. And we can perhaps remember how fierce, how unreasonably fierce, the fight was, and that we had to turn our backs upon them and refuse to think about or use them till the spell was broken and the magic of their attraction was gone, and we can now laugh to think that such things came so near to robbing us of our liberty and of God.

An easy chair, a pleasant book, the pleasures of the table, have stood between many a man and a life of usefulness.

Such things, in so far as they attract any of us, attract by offering a blessing, a happiness of some sort. The Beatitude of the poor in spirit' offers another kind of happiness, the spiritual happiness that comes through the possession of the Kingdom of Heaven. It is not merely for our liberty that we are to struggle with these things of earth. It is that we may get something better, and more worth having, something that ensures a far deeper and more lasting happiness. We cannot have both. The heart that is capable of infinite expansion in the love of God and the possession of Heaven can contract itself to the narrow limits of the love of some earthly comfort. It can do without God and the hope of Heaven, but it cannot do without an easy chair or a good dinner. It can do without righteousness, justice, truth, but it cannot do without the gratification of the senses. Such comforts bring no doubt their consolations, poor, transient and enervating as they are; if they did not men would not care to have them. There is a Beatitude for those who set themselves to possess the Kingdom of earth or any or all of the things it has to give, but behind the Beatitude stand remorse, regret, failure and restless discontent. And there is a Beatitude for those that will not have these things, but in poverty of spirit fight their way to the Kingdom that lies hidden behind them, and become possessors of that

Kingdom which gives to those who win it liberty and eternal peace.

Blessed are the Meek for They Shall Inherit the Land

The Christian Creed is one whole. The perfect balance of truths that sometimes seem opposed. God is three and God is one. Christ is perfect God and perfect Man. The life of man is absolutely dependent upon personal effort, and equally dependent upon the help of Divine Grace, All the effort is vain without the Grace of God, and the Grace of God is powerless without the co-operation of the will of man. Heresy is the overstatement or the understatement of truth, or the pressing of one truth to the neglect of some other, The Christian faith is like the blending in perfect proportion of certain chemicals, which if the proportion be not exact fails to produce the combination desired, or ends in an explosion.



And it is the same with the Christian life, the more you analyze it the more wonderful you see it to be in its sublime justice, its perfect proportions and its intimate cohesion. The Church is most patient of human weakness and sin, yet the ethical system of the Church is intolerant of all sin. Heathen systems were full of paradoxes, blending lofty ideals with shocking vices. They permitted virtue and vice to grow side by side, with their roots interlaced. But Christianity brought out all sin into the light, showed its ugliness and forbade it. No man can be a true follower of Jesus Christ and sin with impunity, and in ignorance that his sin is forbidden. Saint John the Baptist's prophecy of our Lord's work was: "His fan is in His hand and He will thoroughly cleanse His floor, gathering His wheat into His barn and burning up the chaff

with fire unquenchable", Our Lord marked clearly and definitely once for all the line between right and wrong. He called light light and darkness darkness. He that offends against one commandment is guilty of all. That is, he that lives in the deliberate violation of one of the commandments of God destroys the Christian standard and produces a different type of character from that set before him by our Lord. The blending and harmonizing of all the commandments produces a perfect whole, a type unknown outside of the Religion of Jesus Christ. Our Lord does not set before us at first an imperfect standard and as we advance a more and more perfect one. He holds before our eyes from the very first the standard of perfection, bears with our weaknesses and failures, the slowness of our progress, our many sins, but only that He may lead us, as we can follow, to the fulfillment of His design. And thus we are led on - one step forward leads to another. The struggle with one sin leads us to see and struggle with others, As the outer coating of the marble is struck off by the sculptor, the rough outline of the figure is seen, then gradually it steps forth freed from all that incumbered it, instinct with beauty and with life. So in the Christian life one thing leads to another, We do not realize all that that first step involves, all that it commits us to. If we did we probably should not have the courage to take it. We see only the beauty of goodness, the ugliness of sin, and we long to rid ourselves of the chains of perhaps one sin that enslaves us. But we soon find that we cannot stop there, sin is intertwined with sin as virtue is with virtue, and we become quickly aware that we cannot break with this dominant sin without breaking with others. The form of perfect goodness becomes more and more attractive and its light pierces deeper into the soul, revealing evil hitherto unknown. We find ere long that we must go on, or go back under the bondage we hate. As we were the servants of sin, there is only one way out of our slavery; by submitting ourselves to a higher service, we must become

the servants, the slaves, of Righteousness, We are caught in strong currents that bear us onward; we must either force our way out of those currents, or yield ourselves to be carried where they will. The stream of life has as it were two counter-currents, one towards goodness, the other towards evil; to escape from one is to find ourselves in the relentless clutches of the other. There is no still backwater where we can float about as we will. Or to use Saint Paul's image: Every man here on earth must be a slave. He cannot in fact be, as he imagines, his own master. He must be the servant of sin or the servant of Righteousness - the slave of Jesus Christ - "Quem servire est regnare".

And thus, no sooner does a man place himself under the first great Law of Christian perfection - the Law of poverty of spirit - than he finds himself drawn under the force of another Law, growing out of it, and intimately connected with it - the Law of Meekness,

The first Beatitude declares, as we have seen, the Law which should control man's relationship to the creatures, that is, to all created things around him, and the circumstances in which he is placed. It may be a very long time indeed before he is governed by this Law. When he is, he will find that he is already far advanced in the spiritual life. But till he has begun to strive to see things and to act in the light which this Law reveals, his spiritual life cannot be said to have begun. Thus these material things outside of himself that are not, and never can be, a part of himself, become the occasion of a constant struggle in his own soul, So deeply do the things around us act upon character for good or evil, that the effort not only to use them aright but to think of them and value them aright, opens out possibilities and forces issues and produces results altogether incommensurate with the things themselves. The struggle with these things of earth, if properly conducted, becomes

the means of revealing the first glimpses of the Kingdom of Heaven, the victory over them makes the soul its possessor. A change begins to pass over the whole character, the light of another world dawns upon the soul, revealing the things of this world in their true light, perspective and proportion.

But as the conflict deepens and the Law of poverty of spirit effects its results, the outlines of another Law begin to be dimly discerned, and the soul finds itself passing more and more under its control. For meekness and poverty of spirit are in fact twin sisters, they are born together, hand in hand they ripen to maturity, and if poverty dies meekness cannot survive it. Together they live and together they die. The first throb of the life of meekness is felt with the birth pangs of poverty, and if the clouds of earth gather over the soul that once strove for poverty of spirit, and dim the light of the Kingdom of Heaven, meekness dies in the earthly atmosphere. And those things which poverty strengthened the soul to give up, meekness not only fits it to receive again, but gives back to it, to hold and to use in another and better way, and thus Our Lord's promise is fulfilled - "There is no man that hath left house or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for My sake, and the Gospel's, but he shall receive an hundred-fold now in this time". For "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the land"; and long ago the Psalmist sang the same - "The meek spirited shall possess the earth, and shall be refreshed with abundance of peace".

For in fact it is the struggle to attain poverty of spirit that develops the spirit of meekness.

As we have already seen, the first Beatitude forbids the use of nothing, condemns nothing as in itself evil, It points out that the morality lies not in these created things, but in man alone, and that the evil which men seem to get from the

things around them springs from their abuse; from allowing them to gain the mastery over them.

At first it seems to us as if we were struggling with the things themselves; we find various things taking possession of mind or heart or imagination; they become an absorbing interest, and rouse our passions, or enslave the will. We live for them and cannot do without them. Then as we realize the danger, how they close our hearts and eyes to better things, we rise up to struggle with them and set ourselves free. It is a conflict between myself and something that is trying to possess and control my life. There is that thing and here am I; I will not let myself yield to its attraction. And I turn upon it to drive it forth from my life. To one man it seems that the great moral struggle of his life has been with money - not to let the love of money crush out the power of loving anything else; to another it has been with the love of popularity; to another the craving for excitement, and soon. But as the conflict deepens they begin to realize that in fact these external things are but the occasions of awakening and intensifying the inner dualism of their own nature. They excite the antagonism between desire and conscience - conscience calls one way, these things awaken desires which call another way. And by degrees they perceive that the fight is not between self and something else which is not self, but that it is wholly within the kingdom of the soul. I am not fighting as I supposed with material things, but with my own passions, my own desires. The things that I long for may be removed out of my sight, but the longing, or the struggle with that longing, will go on. I may be in absolute solitude without the possibility of acquiring anything removed from my life, but this does not stop the thirst of my nature to possess. Indeed a man may be better for being able to get what he wants than with those unsatisfied desires eating out his heart.

For the human soul is in fact a centre of passionate, unquenchable desire to possess, It cannot be satisfied with itself alone. The very essence of its life is the craving to possess what it has not or for a more complete possession of what it has. It is the fire that is ever consuming it, the force that lashes it into action. It looks out upon things above and around it and longs to make them its own. The heart is made for love and cannot rest without the love of something or some one, and love is never satisfied short of absolute possession.

The structure of our whole nature shows this. The central fire is desire, and all the powers of our being are given us to see, to fight for, and to win the object of our desire. Quench that fire and man turns to ashes. There is nothing to stimulate the powers to action. The force that sets the whole machinery in motion is gone, and it can work no longer, Kindle the fire, let the desire be for the poorest and most worthless object, and the machinery is set in motion. The fullest activity and utmost power of the whole machinery of our being is brought out when the desire is at its height and reaches out to what is most worth having. If therefore a man can direct all the deepest and most passionate longing of his nature towards an object worthy of it and most difficult of attainment, it will develop him to the full.

And this is what the soul was made for, to desire and attain possession of God. It is indeed the longing for God, known or unknown, that keeps it alive. The dim vision of some faint ray of Divine beauty reflected in His creatures, or the clearer entrancing vision of God, revealed to the soul in His Moral Beauty. The restless longing that drives men hither and thither, now in pursuit of one thing, now of another, is in fact the thirst for the possession of the Infinite. And wherever this desire exists it sets in motion all those powers with which man is endowed to overcome every obstacle that

stands in his way, till he grasps and holds as his own what he longs for.

"My soul is athirst for God." That is the cry, often inarticulate, that sets the world's activities in motion. God seen or unseen, known or unknown, Seen in the pure radiance of His Own Moral Beauty, or seen in His creation, and in the beauty of His creation often forgotten and lost sight of.

If therefore the desire for God Himself be awakened in the soul, and it be content with nothing short of God, those powers with which it is endowed to gain possession of Him will be exercised to the utmost of their capacity. There is no other desire that can call out their strength in anything like the same degree of intensity. The effort to possess, and to overcome all obstacles in the way of possession, must be in proportion to the magnitude of the desire. If I desire a thing a little, I will not make much effort to get it, and if there are many difficulties in the way I will give it up. If I desire it more, I will make more effort. If I desire it with a passionate longing that cannot be quenched, if I know that I cannot live without it, I will struggle with all my might to get it, or die in the effort.

But there is, in the Divine order of our nature, an intimate relationship between the desire that stimulates to action and the powers with which we are endowed to satisfy the desire by possession. Some of these powers are for defence, some of them for attack. If they are used to gain that which is worthy of their exercise and effort they grow stronger, more supple and more keen in the struggle, and moreover they do not hurt or make harsh the person that uses them; on the contrary, they enrich the whole nature, and do not become aggressively prominent. They are like a soldier with his sword by his side to use it when he needs it, not like one

with his drawn sword always in his hand. The arms of our warfare are used only in the warfare for which they are given. They form part of the equipment of a character that is pursuing its true destiny, and fall into their place. On the contrary, if the desire which sets them in action be unworthy, they recoil upon the person who uses them, and become blunted and injured in their use. The character deteriorates, the instruments of warfare and defence take an undue prominence, and make the person aggressive, pugnacious, intolerant.

How different, for instance, is the righteous anger of a saint from the outbursts of temper and irritability of one checked or thwarted in some scheme of his own. One is in a sense impersonal, the other is wholly personal. One is a virtue, the other is a vice. Yet the weapon used in each case is the same. Or how different again is the moral firmness of a good man who resists all persuasion to violate his conscience, and the dogged obstinacy of a man who is only determined at all costs to have his own way. One enriches, the other impoverishes the nature, yet the only difference is that in the one case the will is used for no personal end, in the other the end is altogether personal.

And now we can see the intimate connection between the Beatitude of poverty and meekness.

Poverty directs the soul Heavenward, bids it keep all created things in their place as a means to an end, not an end in themselves. And this involves, as we have seen, a strenuous and unceasing conflict, not with these created things, but an inward conflict with our own hearts to direct them towards God, and then with all those weapons of warfare which God has given us to get possession of what the heart desires, and to defend ourselves against the assaults of every one and everything that would hold us back.

And this is the source of meekness.

Meekness is that virtue which is the outcome of the discipline and training of the offensive and defensive powers of the soul, so as to use them primarily and chiefly in the service of God, not for the attainment of earthly ends or for one's own personal ends. Aristotle defines it as "the contrary habit to passion". Yet there is passion in it. It is full of fire and force, for all the passion and fire that might be used for personal ends is used in the struggle to possess God. The passion is there, but purified, intensified and directed. There is no anger that cowers men as the anger of the righteous against iniquity; no will so strong and firm as the will that is wholly dominated by conscience. Such anger, such firmness of will, are not passionless, they are aglow with all the passions of our nature, for all can be summed up in love, and the love of God is love at white heat - a love that can conquer the world.

Thus it is in the effort to gain poverty of spirit that meekness is born, and under its protecting arm it ripens to maturity. Though of gentle mien and kindly form it is the outcome of fierce struggle and ceaseless conflict with self. It is perfectly fearless, for it was born in the din of battle. Though gentle as a woman its nerves are of steel, its muscles of iron. Yielding as it seems, it can lead men to the martyr's stake, and strengthen them to endure all the cruelty that the art of man can devise. Though ready to give place to others, it is not from indifference, but because it has set itself to attain what is more worthy of its possession. "A heart of steel towards self, a heart of fire towards God, a heart of flesh towards men."

"Greater is he that rules himself than he that taketh a city," and the meek man is one who holds himself well in hand, and directs the powers of his nature, which so often make for

destruction, for the construction of his own character in the ways of God, and for the welfare of men.

Meekness, if all this be true, is a very different thing from what it is ordinarily considered. To most people a meek man is a tame, colourless being, without energy, or spirit, or character. Not the possessor of earth, but the beast of burden of the earth's possessors, one whom strong men push out of their way with contempt, and to whom they give but scant consideration; whose characteristics, what he has of them, are mostly negative; who is yielding, plastic, self-depreciative and generally despicable. Our Lord utters no Beatitude we may be well assured upon moral cowardice and weakness; nor as a matter of fact can it ever be said that any Christian virtue is really despicable in the eyes of men. The meekness which men despise is not meekness at all, but a wretched caricature of the great virtue which has as its reward the possession of the earth. The gentle, yielding, retiring spirit of the meek springs from a strong and vigorous stock, its counterfeit imitations spring from weakness and lack of character. One man withdraws from the fight because he has not the courage to face it, the other by a deliberate act of his own will, that he may husband his strength for a sterner and more serious battle. One man is gentle and unassertive because he has little to assert and no power to assert what little he has, the other by a splendid victory over a strong self-assertive nature. Some of the external characteristics of weakness and meekness are doubtless identical, but the sources from which they spring are as wide apart as the poles. One springs from Heaven, the other from the uncultivated and neglected earth of man's fallen nature.

But let the two men be tested. Let some question arise where self-assertion or firmness in the cause of God and His Truth be demanded, and the two characters disclose

themselves. And we see at once that meekness has in it no shadow of weakness, but that the gentleness and readiness to yield are really the outcome of the strength of self-control and a view of life that is altogether supernatural. Indeed, a weak man, in so far as he is weak, will never acquire the Christian virtue of meekness. He who has not the strength to resist outward pressure will not have the strength to resist the pressure from within. His weakness in reality springs from the fact that the flame of desire burns low, and has not the strength to set the machinery of his nature in motion, to work for one definite end.

It is the strong alone, those who are naturally endowed with the gift of strength and determination, or those who have gained strength by faith and prayer and the grace of the sacraments, who will ever gain, beneath the heavenly light kindled by poverty of spirit, the strength to acquire that self-control which blossoms into the gentle flower of meekness.

Those who know the truly meek are always impressed with the feeling that they could do more if they would; that they could win place and power and subdue the strongest, but somehow they will not. It often surprises their friends, not infrequently irritates them, they allow themselves to be misunderstood, let splendid opportunities of showing what mettle they are made of pass by. Like the disciples of Him who said, "Learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly of heart," they cry out, "If Thou be the Christ show Thyself, for no man doeth the works that Thou dost and himself remains in secret", Those who know them feel that underneath the fire is burning. That with all the gentleness the strength is there. That somehow the self-control has not been purchased at the expense of emasculation. It is in fact the gentleness that is a surprise rather than the strength, like some sweet flower growing on the edge of a volcano. For meekness is the virtue that grows out of the inner conflict with the combative and

self-assertive powers of our nature. In proportion to the strength of these powers must be the conflict, and the consequent and evasive beauty of that virtue which is the outcome of the victory.

But be it remembered that these powers are not in themselves bad, however great the evil they effect if undisciplined, nor is the struggle with them in any sense to destroy them. They are on the contrary good, given us by God to carry on the warfare of life; without them we could not fight our way, we should be hustled aside or trampled under the feet of the combatants. Those who have them not are, as a rule, the men who are failures.

For if life be as we say a battle, then man must be a fighter, he must be able to defend himself and to attack his enemies. And if this idea of life as a battle be, as it certainly is in Holy Scripture and in the teaching of Christ, the essential idea underlying and interpreting all else, then the most essential part of man's equipment is the offensive and defensive armour with which he must be endowed. And the man best fitted for the battle of life is the man best equipped with fighting weapons - independence, determination, strength of will, the sense of responsibility, anger, courage, and so on.

Then comes the great question which every one so endowed must answer for himself - What does the battle of life mean for me; and who are my enemies? Upon the answer to that question everything depends. These arms were given for combat, he must use them, they were not meant to be hung up to rust in the temple of the soul, but to be used, and he can use them as he will and against whom he will, and for what purpose he pleases.

The choice lies in fact between two causes for which he must fight. He can fight for himself, for his own advancement and his own personal ends, or he can fight for God - for Goodness, Justice and Truth. His arms are strong for either battle. He can use them to push aside or destroy every obstacle that stands in the way of his attaining the end he desires, or he can use them in the service of God.

And the difference between a strong, domineering, ill-tempered, self-asserting man of the world, and the man endowed with the grace of Christian meekness, is that one uses his powers to fight for himself and the other to fight for God.

Each of these men is equally using the arms given him for the battle of life, each is a fighter, neither of them flinches from the fray. Yet the difference in the effect upon the character of each cannot be concealed, In the one, self is the most prominent feature, in the other self is almost lost sight of. In the one every fighting instinct is alert if self be in any way assailed, in the other the fighting powers are only aroused in the cause of God and right. In the one case they act almost automatically, they have practically passed out of the hands of the person and are at the service of self-love. In the other they are all kept well in hand and under control and like a disciplined army obey the word of command. The one with all his strength and aggressive force betrays his weakness, he is not master of himself. The other shows the dignified strength of perfect self-control. He could use all these powers for his own purposes if he willed, but he does not will, he has trained himself to use them in the higher service of God. There is therefore no loss of power in weakness, there is no effort to destroy any of the gifts with which the soul is endowed for the battle of life; on the contrary, all these gifts are entirely at the service of their possessor, but they are held in the firm grasp of a man who

will never use them in an unworthy cause. He believes that the battle of life is primarily and above all things the battle of right against wrong, of truth against error, and that it is for this that he has been given these weapons, and he will not tarnish them by using them for merely personal ends.

Meekness is thus the virtue that springs from the perfect control of the strongest forces of our nature, all held in leash, to be let loose upon the one real enemy of the soul, and in the one battle worth waging. It is a gentleness whose roots suck their nourishment from a soil of fire and granite,

And such gentleness must always attract, and will unconsciously break down opposition and win its way in the end. And it fits a man above all else to be a ruler.

There are those who exercise the sway of a dominant personality; people yield because they are not strong enough to resist. And there are people who when in a position of authority, if it be only over a child, have the faculty of exercising it in a way that arouses antagonism. Many a child obeys its parent or teacher in a spirit of rebellious fear, many a servant hates, while he yields to the commands of his master. There are rulers who cow into submission those who are under them by temper and sheer force. There are men and women who win their way in the world by a reckless pushing aside of those who stand in their way. There are people to whom others yield because it is not safe to resist them; they are unscrupulous in the choice of the weapons which they use. Such people may hold power and win their way, but they leave the path strewn with wounded hearts and maimed and injured lives and gathering revolt against the success of selfishness and cruelty. But these are not the real rulers of men, and their success in the struggle for life is the success of the strong animal that tears and tramples upon his prey. And if they

live long enough they live into a solitary old age, full of remorse, without friends and without love. But there are others whom somehow it is a pleasure to obey. Men who never stir in others one feeling of jealousy or antagonism who seem to have the extraordinary power of making those who serve them feel honoured in their service, not degraded, who always respect the rights, and call out the dignity of those whom they rule. Men who never drive, but always win and lead, whose path through life leaves in its wake no bitterness or gathering revolt, not one who has been pushed aside or whose rights and aims have been unconsidered.

And these are the born rulers of men, and they owe their power and their sway over others to the fact that in the victory over themselves they have learned to rule, that no one could ever accuse them of personal ends or unworthy motive. Single-minded, strong, self-controlled, gentle and always considerate, they win the world to their feet and receive in full measure and filled with tranquil joy the blessing of our Lord - "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the land".

Blessed are They that Mourn for They Shall Be Comforted

The first Beatitude lays down the Law that is to govern man in his relation to all the things and circumstances of life outside of himself. The second, the Law of interior self-discipline, which, beginning with the effort to keep himself free and unfettered, ends in endowing him with that interior calm and self-control, that power of holding himself well in hand, which are the hidden springs of meekness.



The third Beatitude deals with sorrow and suffering. A religion that has nothing to say about these could scarcely be the religion for the human race, which is marked and scarred and seamed by their presence. Over its history hangs the dark shadow of sorrow, and suffering has ever dogged its steps, seizing now upon one, now another, and torturing them in its embrace. They are shrouded in mystery; none know whence they come or whither they go, and when they come they stir the mind with doubts and questionings that will not be silenced. To each new victim, as they approach, though their presence is ever seen and felt all around, they come as something new, something bewildering. It is one thing to see others suffer, but it is a very different thing to suffer oneself. The arguments and sympathy which we give to others in the hour of trial seem poor and inadequate in our own case. The clearness of vision with which we seemed to understand their meaning and to trace their cause, becomes blurred and obscured when we are ourselves their victims. Their presence, which tradition traces to the dawn of the race,

comes to each new sufferer as the presence of a stranger, bewildering, harrowing, and moving his nature to its depths, disclosing every weakness or bringing to light unknown virtues, testing it, probing it, stirring up its dregs. No man really knows himself till he has passed beneath the lash. It is the supreme revelation of character. It is like the Word of God, spoken of in the Epistle to the Hebrews, "living, and effectual, and more piercing than any two-edged sword, and reaching unto the division of the soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart". It is like the fan upon the threshing floor separating the chaff from the wheat. It is the fire that tries every man's work of what sort it is. It tests the foundations of character, whether they be wood, hay, stubble, or gold, silver, precious stones. Under the test of pain or sorrow, the edifice of many an apparently strong character has fallen into ruins, and many who have passed amongst men as weak, have come forth strong and brave.

A religion therefore of breezy sunshine which ignores the presence of sorrow and suffering, or explains them away, or treats them as unrealities, can have little lasting hold upon suffering humanity. It must have something to tell us about these mysteries which have so vast and deep an influence upon our nature for good or evil.

Now there are two ways in which religion may deal with these mysteries.

1. It may profess to give an explanation of them that will be entirely satisfactory to the intellect and the moral sense, Many men demand passionately the reason of all the misery around them. It is, they feel, the mystery, the unreasonableness, the injustice or cruelty of it that makes it so intolerable. And no doubt this is partly true. We feel very differently towards a difficulty that is merely intellectual

from one that is moral. We can abide patiently the issue while we set ourselves to work out some scientific or intellectual problem. We know in fact that impatience will cloud the mind. There is perhaps no characteristic of the great thinkers of the world that calls for admiration so much as the serenity and calmness of their minds and the unruffled patience with which they prosecute their studies.

But it is very different with great moral problems, How can a man go on if he does not feel sure of the justice or the love of God? Every step of the way is hampered by doubt. How can he serve a God whom he does not feel sure he can either trust or respect? How can he love a God Who holds in His Hands the reins of the universe and yet puts him to such torture of mind and body? Either He is not Almighty or He is not loving in the only sense in which we understand the word. The same man will be calm, strong and patient in the study of an intellectual problem which takes years to solve, who will become angry, bitter and hardened before a moral difficulty. And it is not surprising that it should be so. The intellectual difficulty does not press upon life and character as the moral does. He may never be able to solve the one, but it has not the same issues at stake. His moral and spiritual life are wholly independent of its solution. But his whole character is hampered and held back by the other, for every step of its advance and development depends upon the relation of the soul to God.

Moreover, it is undoubtedly true that it is the more thoughtful and earnest people who feel most keenly the mysteries and difficulties which beset them on all sides. It was Abraham of old who cried, "Wilt thou destroy the just with the wicked, that be far from thee, O Lord?" And the Psalmist who complained, "I do see the ungodly in prosperity; they came in no misfortune like other folk, neither are they plagued like other men". And in our own

day, it is with the anxious questionings of those who feel such difficulties pressing between them and their faith, and who deal with them in the spirit of reverence, rather than with irreverent cavillers who criticize for criticism's sake, that we are concerned.

Religion therefore may profess to give, and may succeed in giving, an answer as to the meaning and reason of suffering that is entirely satisfactory to the intellect and the moral sense. It may lay the mystery bare and set the conscience free from any doubt as to the goodness and justice of God in permitting it, And learned men may assure the ignorant and unlearned that there is no reasonable ground for disturbance or complaint. Yet I think many of us would be surprised to find how short a way such answers would lead us towards peace in the hour of darkness and distress.

2. But as a matter of fact the Christian religion does not profess to give an explanation of the mystery of suffering. It sets before itself a loftier task - to train the soul in such confidence in God's justice and love that it is ready to accept the suffering that He permits in undisturbed peace: "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him", It brings the soul into such direct and close personal relationship with God Himself, that it no longer judges, as one does a stranger, His character by His actions, but as one does an intimate friend, His actions by His character. "I *know* God," so it cries, "and knowing Him I do not question His wisdom or doubt His love, because I cannot understand the reason of all He does."

There are many mysteries in life which we long to have explained, but the office of religion is not to make all such mysteries clear to the understanding, but to remove from the heart all possible doubt as to the Character of God, and this can never be done by mere explanation, for every new

difficulty would demand a new explanation; it can only be done by revealing to the soul, not certain things about God, but God Himself. The irritation and bitterness that arise in men from the moral problems of life, proceed not from the intellect but from the heart. We demand a clearing of the mind, but what we really need is a clearing of the heart. It is not the problem that disturbs us, but the character of the Person who is responsible for the problem. And the cleansing of the heart from all its bitterness and anxiety must be the work of God Himself in His intimate intercourse with the soul, As we get to know Him better we learn to trust Him and to leave ourselves with confidence in His Hands.

A friendship that depends upon constant explanation of everything that is not clearly understood, is not a friendship that can last the test of trial. Friendship must be based upon such personal knowledge, growing out of mutual affection, that doubt becomes impossible. In the light of character we judge action. My friend may do things that seem strange and call forth criticism from those who do not know him personally, but I, knowing the man, judge his actions differently. Indeed it is not the overwrought utterance of religious fanaticism but the sober language of intimate friendship which enabled Job to say, "Though He slay me yet will I trust Him". Such words might be used in human relationships between two friends.

And the Catholic Church has as its end the bringing of the soul into such intimate friendship with God. It may desire as much as any one else to see deeper into the mysteries of life, it may be as keen as possible in its research, using every power at its command to probe further, but the devout Christian is able to possess his soul in unruffled calm, assured that all he may ever know or not know can never disturb his confidence in God.

Suffering and sorrow therefore, entering as they do so largely into the experience of mankind, and forming so large a part of his discipline, are dealt with by Our Lord at a very early stage in the spiritual life. No one indeed can have made any endeavour to conform himself to the laws of the first two Beatitudes, without experiencing that the effort to serve Our Lord brings its own peculiar sufferings, in addition to those that come in the ordinary course of nature. The third Beatitude therefore deals separately with all that causes sorrow in life: "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted".

Now it is scarcely necessary to remark that in this Beatitude our Lord is not uttering a blessing upon the spirit of pessimism or on the melancholic temper.

There are men who are by nature pessimists, whose natural disposition leads them to see and to dwell upon the darker side of life. And there are others who are naturally optimists. Such dispositions have not, in themselves, any moral value, no more than the fact of having an artistic temperament. A man is no better because he instinctively sees the sorrows of life, than another is because he sees its joys. Whatever moral value attaches to them, springs from the effort of the will to overcome the faults and weaknesses that necessarily spring from any one-sided and imperfect view of things.

We cannot therefore suppose that this Beatitude is the expression of the sympathy of the man of sorrows with pessimism, or with men by nature melancholy.

No doubt most of us have known what it is when our ears have been wearied with the frothy chatter of superficial optimism, in times of sorrow and distress to turn to the sad tones of the pessimist as being something finer and truer. And yet in other moods we turn from them with anger and

resentment. We feel that such a temper is not true, its appearance of courage is deceptive and unreal, it poisons all the springs of life and discolours all its beauty, and often degenerates into discontent, cynicism and unbelief.

There is no Beatitude on such mourning as this, it brings no blessing either upon the mourner himself or upon those with whose sorrows he would sympathize.

Each of these dispositions indeed if schooled and disciplined has its place and its work amongst mankind. But only in so far as it faces facts and refuses to close its eyes to things as they are. The joyous nature that has tasted sorrow and felt the smart of pain and borne with courage life's difficulties, comes out mellowed, purified and strengthened, his laughter has lost that uproarious vulgarity that is so offensive, his language is free from exaggeration, and filled with the strong tones of hope and inspiration, and he is able to cheer many a sad heart and lighten many a burden. And the man who, naturally melancholy, has forced himself to look for and to find life's recompenses, and to lay hold of the joys that others see, and to rejoice with them that do rejoice, as well as to weep with them that weep, finds his sympathies enlarged and widened, and knows that he has not lost, but gained infinitely both in knowledge and power, not only for himself but for others. "There has sprung up for him a light in the darkness and joyful gladness for him that is true of heart." His pessimism is robbed of every element of exaggeration and discontent. His character has gained just that blending of cloud and sunshine that makes the whole land fertile.

For the fact is that each of these types of character is merely the raw material which is capable of producing great virtues, if disciplined and sanctified by grace, and, if left to itself, generates its own faults. And it is impossible to say that one

of them is more productive of virtue than the other. Each has produced its Saints.

The Beatitude therefore is uttered not upon the material out of which character is formed, but upon the men who so use the sorrows and sufferings they experience as to carve upon that material the design of God.

We need not pride ourselves upon the fact that we naturally take a more joyous view of life than some others, or, on the other hand, that we see deeper than many into its sorrows, The question is rather, how do we take the sufferings when they come? Do we let them do with us what they will, and affect us just in the way in which such things have a tendency to affect us, or do we rise up and meet them, realizing that they cannot harm us without our own consent?

Now it is undoubtedly true that in our modern civilization there are not a few who use all its arts and gifts to avoid, or escape from everything that interferes with their enjoyment. They look upon pain and sorrow as the only real evils of life, evils to be avoided at all costs. They wish to see and hear of these things as little as possible, and if the world is full of them and they cannot help hearing of the troubles of others, they use every means in their power to shield themselves from their approach, They will quench the first smart of pain by the deadening influence of anesthetics, and fly from sorrow into the wild forgetfulness of amusement or dissipation, These are the chief things which they fear and dread, Their whole life is one constant flight from that which in truth cannot be avoided, or a seizing with a reckless disregard of consequences upon any instrument with which for a moment they can drive them off, till at last, enfeebled, demoralized and without resources their enemy comes in upon them like a flood and overwhelms them.

For every effort to escape results at the most in postponing the evil day, and often the gathering tide sweeps away the barriers that were set against it, bearing them down with relentless force and with accumulated agony upon the helpless creature that is crushed, beaten and defeated in the fearful wreckage that overwhelms it.

For it is the lot of all men to meet and be tested by sorrow and suffering - alas! for those who have spent their strength and exhausted their resources in the vain effort to avoid them. They have treated these mighty powers as their enemies, and have made them their enemies indeed.

And there are others who with a morbid and unhealthy mind feed themselves upon their sorrows, their failures, their sufferings, and revel in the luxury of melancholy. To some men sorrow acts as a stimulant and drives them forth to help the world, to others there is no greater source of selfishness. There are not a few, more commonly perhaps women than men, into whose lives, full of kindness and unselfish devotion, a great sorrow has come with a deadening and stupefying effect, driving them in upon themselves in morbid and self-centred sadness. Their only wish henceforth is to shut themselves in with their grief. If in time life's interests and possibilities begin to appeal to them they turn from them almost as a temptation to disloyalty. They make their grief a narcotic which numbs and deadens them to the claims of life and duty. How often too physical suffering has been the cause of a selfish and exacting life. There are few sights sadder than to see a person who once was devout and unselfish fall gradually under the demoralizing effects of ill-health, the luxuries which illness needs, little by little breaking down habits of self-discipline and undermining the carefully built edifice of the spiritual life, till the whole horizon of the soul becomes contracted and narrowed under the influence of an exacting selfishness.

To such persons, to whichever of these classes they may belong, our Lord's words must come with a startling surprise: "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted".

He tells the world that sorrow and suffering have within them the latent power of bringing to those who have to bear them, Beatitude - happiness. It is a bracing call to look their troubles in the face, to study them with a new interest, to stretch forth their hands and try if they cannot lift the dark veil that cloaks them, and see if the forms beneath are so cruel and pitiless as they seem. It makes a man pause indeed in his flight from trouble when he is told that it is not what it seems, that it comes not to hurt but to bless, or if it does hurt, it is with the surgeon's knife that only hurts to heal.

And it surely is a great thing, in a world so full of misery, where the lot of many is cast in dark places, nay, where it is certain that every one will some time or other have to bear his share of sorrow and pain, to know that these things are not meaningless or useless, the result of fate, or of the indifference of a God who is too great or too far off to heed the piteous cry of His creatures.

In this Beatitude our Lord declares the very opposite. It is not purposeless, It is not inconsistent with Love. It is not merely the action of blind and mindless forces. Suffering has a purpose. It is not only the most searching test of character, it has a revelation of its own to give to the soul that will receive it, a revelation which nothing else can give, Behind the suffering stands One who comes to comfort the sufferer, calling to him to receive such consolation as is well worth all he may have to bear: "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest", So He pleads with the soul - turn to Me and you shall learn what you could

never learn otherwise, the gentleness, the sympathy and the tenderness of God towards the creature of His Hand.

In human relations there is nothing like suffering to show us who are our friends. Some whom we trusted depart and leave us, others from whom we expected nothing, we get much. It is an experience worth a good deal of suffering to learn the unexpected kindness it draws forth. To many it has been a revelation. It has shown us a gentleness and sympathy in people in whom we least expected to find it. Many a man who has had the character of being hard and inconsiderate has, in presence of suffering, revealed himself almost like a different being. There are children who have never known their parents, wives who have never known their husband till suffering came and broke through the reserve that concealed a deep and rich side of their nature, and they might have lived and died without ever disclosing it, if suffering had not come and forced them to reveal it.

Yes, the chamber of sickness and death, the open grave, the shadow of an overwhelming sorrow, the wreck of life's hopes and fortunes, has brought to many a man more joy than sorrow, for they have been the means of breaking down the barriers that kept two souls apart, and of showing to each what was hidden away in the depths of the other's character, or shut in behind an impenetrable pride and reserve. It cannot be doubted that there are not a few to whom such sorrows have been turned into joy - the joy of finding light and love and sympathy where it was least expected. And humanly speaking nothing but the crushing hand of suffering could have done it.

Suffering then, in human relations, acts as the instrument of revealing the deepest and noblest things that are hidden away in human character. If there be love or kindness or the power of sympathy in that strong hard reserved man, I shall

perhaps never know it unless some one who is near and dear to him suffers.

And it is the same in a certain sense with God. We have all been taught from our childhood the attributes of God. We know that He is Almighty, All wise, All holy. We see the reflection of His Power, His Wisdom and His Bounty in the world that, like a picture, reveals the mind of the artist; we learn through our faith His Character as revealed in Jesus Christ, His Love, His Gentleness, His Mercy. Yet many a man in the joy of living or in the struggle of life has very little personal knowledge of God and little personal relations with Him. He accepts what his faith teaches him, but his experience teaches him little or nothing. Yet what our faith teaches us of Him is but to open the way for a more intimate and personal knowledge. For there is the revelation that God has given to His Church, and there is the revelation that He gives to each individual soul who knows Him and loves Him. No person can reveal himself fully to a multitude, however sympathetic it may be. He can only show himself as he is to a friend. The God that rules the universe is my God; in prayer and Communion, I learn to know Him, to enter into His mind, to feel something of His Love.

But there is a deeper, closer, more intimate revelation still. The revelation of God as the Comforter of those who suffer. The mind is so impressed with the thought of His greatness and power, that it is hard for it to grasp the deep reality of all that is revealed of His Character in Jesus Christ. We read how He wept by the grave of Lazarus, how He was moved with compassion at the sight of suffering, how the cry of sorrow was never unheard, but we scarcely realize that these attributes of tenderness and loving compassion are the attributes of the Eternal God which are being revealed to us. This is the Creator of all things, who in His strength sets fast

the mountains and is girded about with power, who sheds tears of sympathy over the grave of Lazarus.

It is to those who lie under the shadow of suffering to whom all this becomes a reality; if they will turn to Him and open to Him their grief they get to know another side of the Character of God - not His power and might, but His pity and compassion, His tenderness and sympathy. It is as though we knew some strong man in public life, who could control the multitude by his sheer force of character, and whose clear intellect and strong will bore down before it all opposition, a man who was mainly known to the world for his indomitable strength, and we were to see such a man by the bedside of his dying child, tender as a woman, all his strength and force for the moment lost sight of in the utmost gentleness and love. It would be a revelation; we should feel that we had never really known the man before.

And so it is with God: on weary beds of sickness, through feverish nights of suffering, in hours of dark despair, to men and women from whom the world has turned with scorn, in homes of grinding poverty, He has come and shown what manner of Being He is. It has been amidst strange surroundings of misery and shame that some have learnt to know God as they never knew Him before. The sense of solitude and helplessness, the consciousness of utter weakness, drives the soul to turn to some one, and finding no human help it turns to God, and feels that it was worth all it had to suffer to gain such consolation and such a revelation.

There is a knowledge of God therefore that we can get only upon the condition of suffering. Those, if there be such, who have never suffered will never attain this knowledge. Those who have never wept will never know what it is for God to wipe away all tears from their eyes. Those who try to steel

themselves not to feel, or school themselves to indifference, are closing the door against a great blessing and a great revelation, Our religion is not meant to make us less sensitive to the many trials and sorrows of life; it makes the heart more sensitive, for it makes our whole nature more refined. It lays it open rather to greater possibilities of suffering. A religious man will not feel less but perhaps more than an irreligious man the unkindness and misunderstandings of those about him. His religion in proportion as it is real will not blunt his nerves, nor harden his heart, nor deaden his senses, but the reverse. He will feel more keenly than any other man the sorrows of life. Our Lord was not indifferent to the cruelty and injustice with which He was treated; He felt it more than we can perhaps imagine, because of the intense delicacy and refinement of His nature. But our religion forbids us to brood in bitterness over what we have to endure, or to set our face like steel and harden ourselves to feel it less; it bids us turn to God for consolation and strength. It teaches us that there is One into whose Ear we may pour out our complaints without fear of bitterness or hardness, and He will teach us how to be at once sensitive and gentle and strong. The Beatitude is for the mourners; not for those who have risen above or sunk below the power of mourning, but for those who still can feel the smart of suffering, the wounds inflicted by others.

"Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." In the light of these words the world looks different. The troubles of life that harden so many, and crush so many more, have the power of raising those who meet them aright into a state of Beatitude in the intimate companionship of One who can turn their sorrow into joy. They bring to those who will receive it a knowledge of God that nothing else can bring. To them God is no longer merely the impersonation of strength and wisdom and power, but of gentleness and sympathy and love.

Such persons do not indeed gain any clearer knowledge of the mystery of suffering - why it is permitted or what is its cause - but they do better, they reap its fruits, and with unruffled calm and strong confidence endure the sufferings that are their lot.

Blessed are They that Hunger and Thirst after Justice for They Shall Have Their Fill

The Catholic faith unquestionably develops in the soul that is true to its teaching a sense of sin and the need of penitence and self-sacrifice such as is known in no other form of Christianity. She holds up in her great religious orders the highest standard of virtue and consecration, and in her doctrine of Purgatory and Indulgences she keeps before the minds of her children the consequences of sin even to the penitent. Forgiveness does not restore the penitent to the same position as the innocent; the temporal consequences of sin must be endured either in this life or the next before the soul can be admitted to the vision of God. The life of man on earth must be the life of penitence. And yet there is no religion so full of joyousness and brightness as the Catholic Church. All who witness its effects upon her children feel this; many wonder at, many are even disedified by it. It is one of the first things that strikes those who have entered it after experiencing some other imperfect form of Christianity. Every other religion, at least in the Western world, is overshadowed by a more or less developed form of the dark creed of Calvin. Life is dark enough and hard enough as it is; the Catholic faith floods it with light and joy and hope. It impresses at once to the full the sterner side of religion, and its power of bringing joyousness and peace.



It is the enemy of morbidness and scruple, which haunt the footsteps of so many who are striving to be good.

Now the first three Beatitudes which we have been considering have, undoubtedly, taken simply as they were uttered, a tendency to produce morbidness and introspection. There does not seem to be much light or brightness in a life based upon the spirit of poverty, meekness and mourning. Take them as they are meant to be, the foundations of the spiritual life, and take them alone, and what could the result be but a piteously sad and disconsolate character, uncongenial, morbid and joyless.

Therefore they have to be tested, to make quite sure before the soul goes farther on its way and can fulfill its work as the teacher of mercy, the peacemaker, the one who can rightly and healthily endure persecution, whether these first Beatitudes have produced any taint of morbidness or an unhealthy view of life and the world.

And the test is the fourth Beatitude - "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice", Has the soul preserved a good healthy appetite for spiritual things? Till it has passed this test it cannot go on; there is something amiss in its poverty or meekness or mourning, and it cannot develop under the laws of the other Beatitudes. A man cannot be very seriously ill, physically, who has a healthy appetite for his food, neither can one be spiritually far wrong whose appetite for spiritual things is normal and healthy; and on the other hand, if the spiritual appetite fail, or is in any way abnormal, it may be taken for granted that something is amiss.

Now it is worth noticing that in that compendium of the devotional life given by our Lord, the Lord's Prayer, there is a

petition which corresponds both in its character and position with this Beatitude.

There are first the three petitions which turn the soul directly to God and place it in the right attitude to receive His gifts - "Hallowed be Thy name," "Thy Kingdom come," "Thy will be done". Then there are the last three petitions for the three great needs of the soul itself, forgiveness, protection and deliverance, and the fourth, like the fourth Beatitude, has to do with food - "'Give us this day our daily bread". It is the central petition, balancing the other three on either side. It is in the devotional life what the Beatitude is in the spiritual. The test of the soul's health, the prayer that it may receive its food from the Hand of God, and consequently that it may not feed upon any food which does not come from His Hand. So with the Beatitude, Blessed are they whose spiritual appetite has not been destroyed by overfeeding upon earthly or heavenly things, or whose spiritual efforts have not been so unwisely or unhealthily made as to interfere with its hunger and thirst after God. It, in fact, as we shall see, controls and regulates the feeding of man's whole nature, body and soul, in such a manner that the spiritual life takes its proper place and has room for its due and healthy development.

Now God did not leave man to discover for himself the law that was to control him in the choice of his food, and in the order in which he was to feed the different parts of his complex nature. His nature is threefold, body, soul and mind, or at least it may be so considered for practical purposes, and the life and health of each of these depends upon its feeding upon healthy food, and the health of the whole person depends upon these different parts being fed in due order and with proper consideration for the rest. The body will die if it be not fed, and mind and soul equally need nourishment; if the mind never studies or disciplines itself to

think, its powers soon die of atrophy, and if the soul takes no spiritual food, never turns to God in prayer and faith, it will die.

In the Garden of Eden God laid down for man, at the very start of his life, the law of food; and history shows us that upon obedience to that law depends his well-being.

For his body there were all the trees of the garden of which he might freely eat; for his soul there was the tree of life in the midst of the garden. But there was another tree, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and of this God said to him, "Thou shalt not touch it or eat it, for in the day in which thou eatest of it thou shalt die the death". The tree of the knowledge of good and evil appealed to the mind, the intellect. It contained a mystery which could be solved by partaking of its fruits. Hitherto man only knew good; the fruit of this tree would give him the knowledge of good and evil. At the base of the human mind there lies the desire to know, the source of all progress, lashing the mental powers on to probe and search and examine. It may sink down to the mere curiosity of the village gossip; it may rise to the longing of the saint to know God; it may be used or abused, but there it is, the force that sets the powers of the mind working and keeps them awake. And needless to say this desire is not in itself wrong; on the contrary, it is God-given and good, part of the equipment of man's nature for life.

In this desire to know lay the danger to man in his unfallen state, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil objectively appealed to him to gratify the desire in a way that was forbidden by God. This constituted his temptation. And we know the result. He plucked of the fruit and ate. He overturned the order of nature and fed the mind to the detriment of his highest spiritual interests. He put the satisfaction of his intellectual hunger and thirst after

knowledge before the hunger and thirst of his soul for God, He sacrificed himself and his best interests to the desires of one part of his nature. The intellect and mental powers have their office and place in the development of man's personal life, but it is the height of folly to sacrifice his personal welfare to any part of himself, and this he did. He was ready to feed his intellect and satisfy his desire to know at all costs. He found, alas! too late, that the cost was heavier than he had anticipated. It was the loss of the indwelling Presence of God, and the loss of that interior union and co-operation of all his powers to lead him to God. He was no longer at one with God, nor at one with himself. The flesh began to lust against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh, The Divine order of his nature was overthrown and the lower parts began to assert their demands against the higher. The powers and passions, broken loose from the restraining presence of God, seemed as it were to gain a life of their own, and to live for their own ends, not for the well-being of the person who possessed them, Fallen man found himself no longer able to control or hold together the manifold powers that once co-operated throughout the vast empire of his being. He had by his own act broken up this inner unity, never in this life to regain it again in its fullness.

And this, which has laid human nature open to all sorts of degrading vices, and made it oftentimes the slave of ungoverned passions, was the result, not of some gross carnal sin, but of failing to exercise the law of self-restraint in the matter of feeding the mind. The intellectual life considered as the only real life and separated from the rest of man's nature as if it were the whole of it, a thing to live for and sacrifice everything else for, may lead to the most unexpected and humiliating results, The intellectual life, as truly as the physical life, must be lived in subordination to man's highest interest and true end, which is that of a spiritual being living for God. To consider mental growth and

development, in the ordinary meaning of the terms, as the end and aim of man's life, is to overturn the order of Nature. He who feeds his mind at the expense of his spirit must abide by the consequences, and the consequences will not be that he shall be filled, but that he, his truest self, shall find too late a hunger of his nature that no earthly knowledge can satisfy.

The law of food then laid down by God at the beginning of human life, even before the fall, was that man must practise self-denial and self-restraint in the feeding of that part of his nature whose appetites are most strongly felt and which if left to itself would feed itself at the expense of his higher nature, in fact at the expense of the welfare of the person.

The danger to unfallen man lay, not in the body, but in the mind. The body had not yet broken loose from the government of reason and conscience, the indwelling presence of God held body and soul in perfect balance. But the longing of the mind to know more and more, which, as we have seen, is an integral part of our nature and in itself good, laid man open to the temptation to search for knowledge where it was forbidden, and to refuse to accept the limitations placed upon it by the Divine command. That which is indeed one of the greatest sources of man's strength, considered merely as an intellectual being, became the source of all his weakness as a moral and spiritual being.

And that primary law given in Eden before the fall remains the law of man's food throughout his whole earthly life. Every one must practise self-denial in feeding some part of his nature, often indeed not merely self-denial but a rigorous fast, if he would duly develop his whole person. Each one knows for himself where that self-denial needs to be practised. What is a danger to one is no danger at all to

another. One needs strict self-denial with the body, another with the mind, another with the heart.

But since the fall and the consequent loss of union and co-operation of all the parts of our nature working together for the development and perfection of the person, the law of fasting and self-denial reaches still further.

It is impossible to satisfy all the desires of our nature, for they run in different, often in directly opposite ways. To satisfy the desires of one part necessitates the refusal to satisfy those of another. "The flesh lusts against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would." Consequently, even apart from religion, there is no man living who sets himself to do anything with his life, even if it be merely to live for the enjoyment of the body, except he is prepared to fast. Each of us must choose for ourselves what we shall live for, and with that choice there necessarily follows the law of fasting and self-denial. One man decides that the intellectual life is the only life worth living, he will live the life of thought and study, and forthwith he finds that there are within him desires that reach upward and downward that stand in his way. He must refuse to yield to them if he will live wholly and to the full the life he has chosen. There are desires of the flesh which if satisfied cloud the intellect. There are desires of the spirit which curb and check him in many ways. He learns quickly that he cannot live the life he has chosen unless he is prepared to practise a rigorous self-denial both of the body and of the spirit.

Or another ridicules the idea of all self-denial, and says the only thing worth living for is the enjoyment that comes through the indulgence of the senses and of the flesh. But he forgets that he is not a mere animal, Other desires rise and clamour for satisfaction whether he will it or not. There

are moments when the flesh palls and conscience cries aloud for better things, or the mind, drugged and stupefied, awakens and craves for food. Indeed there is no life that is lived under stricter and more exacting rules of self-denial than that of the sensualist or pleasure seeker, albeit the fasting is a fast from all that is best worth having and against all the laws of reason.

The Christian law of fasting thus merely sets before the world that, fasting being a necessary law of our nature under its present conditions, reason and conscience demand that the fasting should be reasonable, the denial to satisfy the desires of any part of our nature whose demands are in antagonism to our truest, that is our personal and spiritual, development, It is folly to sacrifice a life-long advantage for a moment's pleasure, It is greater folly to sacrifice eternal enjoyment for temporary pleasures, It is folly to sacrifice the enjoyments of the mind for those of the body, still greater to sacrifice spiritual joys and the power of entering into them for either. The Christian law of food therefore merely bids us live according to the dictates of reason. And the Beatitude formulates this law in assuring us of the happiness it ensures - "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice, for they shall have their fill".

But again. No sooner had Adam fallen than he was driven forth from the Paradise of Peace into a world of conflict and struggle. Indeed he could no longer have stayed there. The environment suited to the development of unfallen man was in no way suited to him in his fallen condition. His nature in a state of inner conflict and strife needed to meet the difficulties of the outer world, that in fighting them he might gain power over himself, in conquering them he might gain the victory over himself.

Yet so great was the contrast, both inward and outward, with the past, that there was the danger of despair. He had failed in the days of his innocence, what hope could he have for the future now that he had fallen. The light that shone within was as the dimmest twilight compared with the radiant glory that illuminated every faculty of his soul from the indwelling presence of God; and the loss of that clear light within changed the appearance of external things - they deceived him. He no longer possessed that intuitive knowledge of their meaning and their end that once was his. This poor exile at war with himself found himself amidst surroundings and forces that seemed arrayed against him for his ruin. No wonder then if filled with despair he cried, "It is better for me to die than to live". But then the cravings of hunger came upon him, and the instinct of self-preservation bid him arise and struggle for food, and the kindly earth responded to his touch. And as he worked his nature woke from its stupor and despair, he saw possibilities within himself and in the world around him unfolding before him, and as he beheld the fruits of his labour in a changing world and a kindling mind, he would recall those words of God ere he was cast out of Eden, words that seemed harsh and that spoke as of a penalty, but which now he knew to be the remedy against listlessness and despair, the power that alone could give him interest and hope in the hour of darkness, God had said, "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread". Knowing man better than he knew himself, and the dangers that beset him on all sides, God bound together for fallen man the law of food and of labour - If you will not work you cannot eat, if you do not eat you must die.

And the necessity to work for one's living has been the remedy for many an evil, the means of revealing to multitudes dormant powers and unknown gifts - a veritable blessing to the human race, For God's punishments here on earth are never merely penal, they are remedial, and many

who have murmured against the lot that forced them to work so hard to keep body and soul together little knew how necessary the lash of hunger was, to discover to themselves their powers and make them give them to the world. It is under the stimulating influence of work that timidity and morbid self-distrust are overcome and the cloud of dark despair lifts and rolls away. No one knows what is in him till he tries, and many would never try if they were not forced to.

But the law, "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread," applies not merely to the food of the body, but to the food of mind and spirit. You cannot feed your mind, in the true sense of the word, without labour, nor can you feed your soul.

What labour it has cost the human mind to separate the true from the false in that mixed condition of things consequent upon eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, Truth seems often entangled in a mesh of falsehood. The wheat wrapped up in the chaff, light and darkness so mingled that we live in a land of twilight, through which here and there some bright points of truth make themselves seen, The outward appearance of things deceives us. What labour it has cost us to learn to know things as they are, instead of as they seem. And not one atom of truth has been given the human race to feed upon save at the cost of long and wearisome mental labour, and in obedience to the law, "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread". It is as true of the mind as of the body, "If a man will not work neither shall he eat". Only that knowledge which we have gained for ourselves or made our own by hard mental work can really feed so as to nourish and develop the mind.

And it is true equally of the spirit. We cannot feed our souls with spiritual food save at the cost of labour. The Divine

authority with which the Church teaches us the Truths of Revelation is not meant to save us the trouble of thinking for ourselves, those truths will only have a life-giving power of nourishment for the individual in so far as he has made them his own by painstaking thought and by the spiritual exercise of faith. He who labours hardest and exercises himself most in the spiritual conflict will feed with most satisfaction on the Bread of Life. Often no doubt the failure to receive grace proportionate to our frequent communions results from lack of appetite, through lack of exercise. Even, therefore, in regard to the Heavenly food of our Lord's Body, the law laid down in Eden for fallen men applies, "In the sweat of Thy face shalt thou eat bread".

These two laws then in regard to food were laid down for man by God Himself, the first at the very beginning of his life - the law of self-denial, The second at the beginning of his new life, and as he entered upon all those conditions both outward and inward which resulted from the fall - the law of labour.

But there was yet another. As the human race spread and developed, "God seeing that the wickedness of men was great in the earth, and that all the thoughts of their hearts were bent upon evil continually, it repented Him that He had made man," and He sent the flood to punish and to purify the earth. And as Noe came forth upon the new world, God said to him: "Increase, and multiply, and fill the earth, And let the fear of you, and the dread of you, be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every fowl of the air, upon all that moves upon the earth: all the fishes of the sea are delivered into your hand. Every thing that moves and lives shall be meat for you: even as the green herb have I delivered them all to you: saving that flesh with blood ye shall not eat." "The blood ye shall pour out upon the earth like water."

By the act of disobedience man had fallen under the penalty of which God had forewarned him, "In the day ye eat thereof ye shall die the death". He had lost that great gift, the crown of original justice - the indwelling Presence of God.

Compared with what he had been, even in the long years of his life of penance, he was dead. The glory of his life had departed from him. And he was reminded of this in the new life which he was about to start after the flood. "The blood which is the life thou shalt not eat." He must never forget his loss, he must wait and pray for the restoration of the gift which he had forfeited through eating what was forbidden. He must not eat the blood which is the life, and as he poured it out upon the earth he would be reminded of his sin and punishment, "In the day that ye eat thereof ye shall die the death". It does not always follow that people understand the meaning and reason of God's commands; some of them we shall perhaps never understand. But God's commands, we may feel sure, are not only reasonable, but have the power of effecting their purpose in those who devoutly and humbly obey them, even though they do not understand them. The law was the pedagogue to bring men unto Christ. Those who obeyed it in the spirit of faith were trained, unconsciously to themselves, in methods of life and thought which led them in fact to Christ. They did not understand its purpose, nor could they possibly understand it as yet, but God knew His own purpose and the best way to effect it, and He placed them under these commands that they might be trained.

So with the command to pour out the blood upon the earth. No doubt in time the reason for the command would be forgotten, if it was ever understood, but taken with the system of the law, entering as it did into their daily life as a Divine command, it would create, or at least help to preserve, the impression of a life lost that was to be restored, and to stimulate their hope for the coming of the Messiah who should restore all things.

These three laws with the moral and spiritual principles that underlay them, and which were to be produced by them, were laid down by God for His people from the Fall to the Incarnation.

Then on the eve of the Passion as He sat with His disciples at the last supper, He took bread and broke it and said, "This is My Body," and He took wine and poured it out saying, "This is My Blood of the new Covenant which shall be shed for you and for many unto the remission of sins; drink ye all of it". And His disciples, brought up as they had been under the law, would have looked amazed. Drink the Blood. Why, the Blood is the life, and the law forbade them to drink it. But the time had come; the years of waiting were at an end. The woman's seed was there to give back in all its fulness the life that had been forfeited by disobedience. "For this is the testimony that God hath given unto us eternal life, and this Life is in His Son; He that hath the Son hath Life, and He that hath not the Son hath not Life." "Except therefore ye eat My flesh and drink My blood, ye have no life in you." Regenerate man received that indwelling Presence of God to heal the wounds and mend the disorders consequent upon the Fall, and the blood of the second Adam shed and given to him was at once to nourish and remind him of that new life.

O wondrous Love, that Flesh and Blood
Which did in Adam fail,
Should strive afresh against the foe,
Should strive and should prevail.
And that a greater gift than grace
Should flesh and blood refine -
God's Presence and His very Self
And Essence all Divine.

Thus, in Christ, man received in its fulness the life that he had lost, and he had the Bread from Heaven for his spiritual

food, and found on earth the food for mind and body.

But the feeding of this threefold nature still remained, as we know well, under the two laws of self-denial and labour.

Now the bodily, mental and spiritual life is the life of one and the same person. It is my body, my mind, my spirit. The food enters into and nourishes or injures the person through any one of these channels. The food of the body does not affect merely the body, it affects the whole Being; and so with that of mind and spirit. The material food which I take upon my lips can cloud my mind, dethrone my reason, dishonour and degrade my soul. How strange it seems that a material thing entering as food into one's system can have such effects upon that part of our nature which is not material. Here is one who has become utterly unreliable, whose word or promise no one can depend upon, whose moral sense is warped, through the habit of taking drugs. It has run right through every department of the life of the whole person, leaving the stamp of dishonour and shame on all, degrading the whole man's life.

Or again, the food upon which the mind is fed affects not only the mind but the body and the soul. What more evanescent and immaterial than thought? Yet thought can affect the bodily health. A healthy mind will produce a healthy body - at least it tends to do so - and unhealthy thought can ruin the bodily health. Many a man with shattered nerves and weakened frame has been told by his physician that the cause of his disease and its remedy lies in his own hands, he can do nothing for him unless he can learn to discipline his mind and not to allow it to feed upon unhealthy food. The thoughts of the mind run, as it were, upward and downward, and strengthen or relax the fibre of the spiritual and physical life. Indeed the very flesh of a man of middle life is stamped and seamed and furrowed by his

habits of thought, more perhaps even than by physical acts. Often even the carriage and bearing of the bodily frame indicates the character of the thoughts.

And again, the food of the spiritual life affects both body and mind; unhealthy spiritual food has not rarely led to a morbid spiritual life, and an over-strain of mind and body, scruples, morbidness, despair. Many when they have been led by a wise spiritual guide to change their spiritual food to a more bracing and nourishing diet, have found that it has given them a more vigorous life of body and of mind. False or imperfect religious systems are not unknown to have ruined the health, both mental and physical, of not a few. For untruth must always have bad results upon a nature constructed in every fibre of its being for truth. And he who feeds himself in the highest department of his being upon anything that is not true, or fails to feed upon what is true, must expect to find that the results are evil and harmful to his whole being. The revelation given by Jesus Christ to His Church, when He bid her teach men "to observe *a//* things whatsoever I have commanded you," is enough, and only enough, to ensure our welfare on our earthly journey. If, therefore, any part of that revelation be withheld or tampered with, the result must be loss of perfect health and vigour to those who are fed upon insufficient or unhealthy food.

Again, what more spiritual than that bread from Heaven provided by our Lord for His people, His own sacred Flesh and Blood. Yet many feeding upon it unwisely or unworthily, too seldom or too frequently, or while in a state of sin, have gained from it not health but sickness, Saint Paul warns his Corinthian converts that because of their unworthy communions "many are infirm and weak amongst you, and many sleep". And on the other hand, what multitudes that

no man can number have gained through it vigour of mind and even of body.

Thus the food of the spiritual or mental or physical nature affects in greater or less degree the whole man. For however complex his being, however great the inner conflict of one part against the other, man is essentially one.

Now, the great struggle for each of us begins when one part of our nature cries out for food that will injure the rest. When body or mind hungers and thirsts for that which the spirit forbids, We are free to feed ourselves as we will, but we must abide by the results.

Who does not know, which of us has not experienced, the terrible struggle. Hunger and thirst are the strongest expressions of want. The starving man or the man parched with thirst in his frenzy will do anything to satisfy himself. Under such circumstances men will do deeds which are contrary to every instinct of humanity from which in saner moments they would recoil with horror and disgust. And in whatever part of their being this hunger and thirst is raging it is hunger and thirst, and corresponds with the craving of the body for food and drink. It is the extreme expression of want. It seems as if without this food or drink they must die, They crave for it as for life. And yet to partake of the forbidden food is to poison and kill what is highest in them. Some bodily passion alive, astir like a hungry beast in the night, cries out for food, and the calm voice of conscience forbids it. The heart, the mind, is faint and athirst with wild desire for that which it cannot have save at the terrible cost of spiritual death. Many a man outwardly calm, passing through the great thoroughfares of life, taking part in its business or pleasures, is torn and tossed and maddened by this fierce conflict within his nature. Will he yield and throw the food for which it craves to this wild beast within him, or

will he starve it into submission and feed his higher nature till it gains the mastery? That is the question. That is the question which each must answer for himself to God and his conscience. Upon the answer depends the results whether he will sink or rise.

It was the first temptation of our Lord in the wilderness ere He entered upon His public ministry; the question put by the Tempter to test Him whether He had anything to fear from Him or not - "If Thou be the Son of God turn these stones into bread and feed Thy starving body". And our Lord's answer came calm and clear and strong: "Not by bread alone doth man live, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God". He takes no heed of the Tempter's challenge, "If Thou be the Son of God". He links Himself on to the human race into which He had condescended to enter. Jan shall not live by bread alone. No man can. There are higher needs than those of the flesh, and there are times when it were better to let the body starve to death than feed it by disobeying any word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.

For there is a hunger of the soul. "My soul thirsts for Thee, my flesh also longs after Thee," cried the Psalmist. "Like as the hart pants after the water brooks, so longs my soul after Thee, O God." Any food given to any lower part of our nature that for the moment deadens this hunger, or makes the soul incapable of satisfying it, subverts the whole order of our nature and works its ruin. It is the truest mercy to be stern with ourselves, to sacrifice what is lowest in us for what is highest. For as the lower nature is constantly refused the food it demands, in obedience to the higher, its demands become less insistent, its hunger less ravenous. It yields at last in submission, and the rebellious slave becomes an obedient servant. But if the demands of the higher nature be refused and it be sacrificed to the lower, though the hunger and thirst for God becomes more and more deadened and

seems at last to die, it never really does die. It is the essential need of our being, and it will waken at last to wreak its vengeance, A terrible vengeance, When - it may be in old age - men find their great mistake, and as earthly things pass from their grasp the hungry soul knows too late that it can never be satisfied, and the cry for God is not the cry of devotion but of despair: "My soul is athirst for God, but can nowhere find Him".

Therefore our Lord lays down the true law of man's life on earth: "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice, for they shall have their fill."

Blessed are the Merciful for They Shall Obtain Mercy

The last Beatitude, They that Hunger and Thirst after Justice, placed the soul under that law of self-discipline and self-denial by which it preserved and developed amidst its manifold desires the hunger and thirst after God. It is left gazing up into Heaven.

This Beatitude brings it down again to earth. For gazing into Heaven will not necessarily help to get us there. And hungering and thirsting after God necessitates working for Him.



For heaven and earth are bound together by the closest bonds, and if any one in his desire for Heaven would forget or neglect the work of earth, he will find that Heaven soon grows dim, or assumes a fantastic and unreal form. It is here amidst the conditions of our earthly life in which we find ourselves placed that our hunger for God is to be developed, and our conception of Heaven purified, spiritualised and made real.

For God is to be known and reached, not merely by prayer and immediate communion with Him, but by fulfilling the duties and obligations of life. We do not stand alone. Our life is interwoven with many people and many things; it is not the life of a pure spirit. We have bodies as well as souls. We have to act as well as to think and love, and though our thoughts may reach to Heaven they soon become vague,

dreamy and deceptive unless they find an outlet through action.

And thus we are tied and bound to the people and things of earth by manifold claims and duties which we cannot neglect, except at the peril of losing our appetite for heavenly things.

There has been always a tendency with a certain type of mind to consider man as a purely spiritual being, and to ignore, or try to ignore, the body as an integral part of himself and the material things amidst which he is placed. Such a false conception of his nature and its conditions must always bring its own revenge. Thought must find expression in action. Speculation must be brought to the test of facts. And the highest spiritual aspirations of the soul will quickly evaporate in unreality and self-deception unless they crystallise in definite virtues and good deeds. "The first of all the commandments," said our Lord, "is, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, thy whole soul, and thy whole mind; and the second is like to this, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." The love of God, therefore, does not rest in itself, it sends us forth to do kindly acts to man, If it finds no such expression, it is unreal and untrue.

"If ye love not your neighbour whom ye have seen, how can ye love God whom ye have not seen." The love of Heaven, according to the apostle, the reality of our relationship to the unseen, is proved and tested by the reality of our relationship to the seen and tangible. The forces of Heaven are to be applied to and developed in the things of earth, It is indeed true that we cannot be judged merely by the things that we do. There is more in the heart of the poorest and humblest than he can express, but all that is in him tries to express itself and goes to make up the value of the act,

just as the expression of the face is the outcome of countless aims, emotion and desires that lie behind.

Just as some scene of Nature has more in it than the combination of those things that make it up.

Thoughts that could not be packed into a single act,
Fancies that broke through language and escaped,
All that I could not be, all men ignored in me -
This I was worth to God whose wheel the pitcher
shaped.

And thus we are bound on all sides to the men and things around us by the manifold claims of duty. And duty is that which we owe. It is the law of our relationships to all that we are in contact with. We do not make these for ourselves, no more than we make the physical laws by which we are surrounded. We find them here. I have a duty to everything I own, to every person I meet. I may fulfill it or not, as I please, but I cannot escape the penalty if I do not fulfill it. The broken law avenges itself upon the person who breaks it.

For all these duties, expressed as they may be in the terms of law, imply a law-giver. They are in fact the Will of God. "The Law," says Saint Paul, "is holy." And duty is a holy thing, bringing us into a true relationship with God. If the heart will carry us off in its fiery chariot to Heaven, duty brings us back to earth to test, to discipline and to educate us, In doing our duty and fulfilling the obligations of life, we are serving and learning to know God no less truly than in prayer. Through the many calls and claims of life our character gets rounded off in shapely form and due proportion, and our knowledge of God enlarged, widened and deepened. Peter on the house-top at Joppa had a mysterious vision; he was carried out of himself and lost for the moment in ecstasy. Then came the call of duty, the

knock at the door, the intrusion of earth upon Heaven. Had he neglected the call of duty, which was in fact the appeal of some unknown fellow-creature, he would never have understood the purport of his mystic Communion with God. It was in carrying out the practical work of life that he learnt its meaning.

There are, no doubt, special vocations to a life devoted almost entirely to prayer, and those whom God calls to such a life He leads and disciplines in His own way, but except in such extraordinary cases, the manifold ties of life, the calls and claims of the people and things around us, are meant to be, not hindrances to communion with God, nor means of lessening our appetite for Divine things, but various ways through which the soul is to be trained in the knowledge of God. We have only to see the effect upon the character of a person who neglects his definite duties for prayer to know how great his loss is, and how his religion, when it is made an end in itself, instead of a means by which everything in life is sanctified and elevated, becomes distorted, unreal and a source of self-deception.

In the first Beatitude we are taught our relationship to all created things, and the ceaseless conflict that is involved in using them aright, lest the things which should have been for our use become to us an occasion of falling. The duty that is thus imposed upon each of us is one of the greatest sources of self-discipline, and to the man who is conscious of his own weakness and the need of Divine assistance it becomes a means of forcing him to prayer and communion with God.

He quickly learns that in this matter apart from God he can do nothing, and that he can only do his duty through the help of Christ who strengthens him.

But this Beatitude brings us into another world, A world more difficult to deal with, to know, and to understand. The world of men. We live amongst people, and we know what a power for good or bad they exercise upon us. A man may have learnt to be master in the world of things, and yet be very far from master in the world of people. We can perhaps steel ourselves to be indifferent to things. We can learn to do without many things that once were necessary to us; we can train ourselves to sit so loose to the things around us that they stir no desire in our hearts. But we cannot be indifferent to people. All that affects our relationships with men affects ourselves. We cannot drive a person out of our life as we can give up the use of something. The things around us are given us as our servants; we can shape and bend them as we will, we can use them for a time and cast them aside, we can exhaust them of all their value and then throw them away without a thought; but we cannot so use people. We cannot manipulate them as we like, we cannot brush them aside or ignore them. A man who has learnt to bend the forces of Nature to his will finds that he cannot bend or break a person. A strong man is often baffled by a little child, because he tries to treat it as he treats everything else around him as if it were his to mould and form as he pleases, Personality has a terrible power of inflicting vengeance upon any who would unduly interfere with its rights. It has rights, and those rights are sacred, and he who refuses to recognise them, though it be a father with his own child, will surely bear the almost ineffaceable marks of the wrong he has done branded upon his own character.

When we turn therefore from things to persons we find ourselves in a different world, and amongst forces and agents that have to be dealt with in a very different way. Here there is a subtle and illusive power that reacts in a startling way upon those who have to deal with it. A strange magnetism is exhaled from personality that repels and

attracts and forms unexpected combinations, There is a sensitiveness of nature in relation to persons that has no parallel with anything else. You cannot live with another and be merely indifferent; the magnetism of personality draws or repels. You cannot ignore it, you feel it all over, not on this side or on that only, but you feel it all through your own personality. Try to ignore any person who is living in your house, and you will find it is impossible. His mere presence makes claims upon you which, if you refuse to recognise, hurt you, follow you about, crowd upon your mind, make you angry and embitter you. Personality is too aggressively positive to be merely set aside; it has a subtle way of asserting itself that you feel all over, causing a pleasure or pain the like of which is produced by nothing else. A broken bond of kinship or friendship will poison all the springs of life. A wound received from another person has a poignancy and persistence that hurts to the very heart's core. The love of a person is unlike the love of anything or everything else in the world; it enlarges, expands and transforms the whole nature. Surround yourself with everything that is ordinarily supposed to bring happiness - health, wealth, culture, refinement; the presence of one uncongenial companion with which your life is bound up can ruin it all. Or lose everything that you have in the world - the presence of one whom you love can enable you to bear it with equanimity. No one, thank God, ever lived on earth wholly indifferent to and independent of others. If any one ever tried to do so he would find that the price of such independence was, that it made him inhuman. For better or for worse the life of each member of the human race is largely dependent upon his relations with others.

We need, therefore, to cultivate that attitude towards others that will enable us to draw out the best that is in them, and to lead them to draw out the best that is in us.

For we know full well that there are men who influence - often quite unconsciously - those with whom they are thrown for evil, and others whose influence is always for good. It has been a surprise to many a man to find how he rouses the worst passions - anger, jealousy, dislike - in those with whom he is thrown; men who display no such feelings towards others, There is something in him that irritates or repels or excites antagonism. It is difficult to say what it is, but there it is, and he goes through life a constant source of disquieting and disturbing influence, though he himself may be in his way a good man and one who strives to do his duty.

Now the Beatitude lays down the Law that is to control our relations with men for good, not for evil, and the effort to place ourselves under this Law will often disclose to us the cause of our failure, if we have failed in the past.

"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy."

It comes upon us perhaps as rather a surprise. There are other virtues that would at first sight seem more suitable. For this Beatitude, be it remembered, is the one that regulates our relations with the whole world of men for good, that we may deal well with them and they with us, That so far as in us lies we may make the men we meet better, not worse, and may meet at their hands with good, not evil.

We might expect to find a law that would directly control our passions, such as patience, self-control, large-hearted toleration, unselfishness,

But I think it will be found that the Beatitude includes and goes deeper than any or all of these together.

For what is needed is not merely a disposition that protects oneself from the dangers that arise through our intercourse with men, but one which goes much further, a disposition

which checks the evil and draws out the best in others. The Beatitudes are not merely for the recluse, they are for men whose duty calls them out into the world to mix with men of all kinds, of different faiths and of no faith at all. And towards all whom we meet we have a duty; we are, as Catholics, not only the light of the world, but the salt of the earth, the leaven that is to leaven the whole mass. How often we come back after a morning's prayer and resolution, followed by a day in which we are harried, irritated, set on edge by people, and feel as if it would be better to leave them all and try to serve God as best we can alone. But we know it is impossible. The ties that bind us to others are too deep and strong; the effort to break any one of them only reacts upon ourselves and loosens our relations with God. We have therefore not only to protect ourselves from the evil influences that are around us, we have to spread a good influence, to overcome the evil by good. A person may keep his temper with an angry man, and may rather irritate him than otherwise; one may be unselfish in one's dealings with a very selfish person, and may only make him more selfish. We need to go further than that; we need to develop that kind of goodness which, even if it be only for the moment, tends to draw out the good that is in others, and to make them feel that goodness is at once stronger and more attractive than badness.

And the Beatitude of mercy sends us into the world with that characteristic which above all others disarms it and is in the greatest contrast to its spirit. Worldliness is essentially and aggressively selfish; it makes men hard and cruel, it gives no quarter and expects to get none. Its instinct is the struggle for life and the survival of the fittest; it transfers the law of the physical world to the world of human beings; it knows nothing of, or, if it does, it is afraid to trust, those finer qualities of human nature that as a matter of fact equip men better for the struggle of life and in the long run make them

fitter to live. But when it comes in contact with these it is baffled and disarmed. It has no weapons to fight them. It is like a vulgar rich man in presence of a gentleman - it feels at a disadvantage. Human nature clad in all that is coarsest, most violent, most selfish, and thus equipped for the battle of life, in the presence of that same nature clad in the panoply of Christian virtues, is bewildered and subdued. It not only recognises a finer courage, a subtler strength, a nobler type, but it perceives its own weakness and failure. Like Goliath before David, it may brag and boast and bully, but it soon finds a strength with which its clumsy weapons are unable to cope, and it confesses itself defeated.

The old Roman Empire with all its consolidated strength brought the arms with which it had conquered the world to bear upon Christianity, but she found herself powerless to fight it; violence, brute strength, cruelty, were met by new weapons - gentleness, pity, charity - which not only conquered but converted her, and in three hundred years the battle was won and the empire became Christian.

Now this Beatitude is intended to effect these results, It not only places the Christian in his dealings with others under the law of mercy, that is gentleness, kindness, sympathy, pitifulness, but it assures him that he will produce these same characteristics in others. The merciful shall obtain mercy. The kindly and gentle nature will meet with kindly treatment. Those who live under the Law of the Beatitude will, if it be but for a moment, disarm the most cruel and selfish and make them merciful.

It is based upon one great principle that runs through human nature, and that is the principle of responsiveness. Every man to a large extent makes his own world. We find people pretty much as we meet them. A reserved man lives in a world that seems closed against him. He knows little of

what is going on in the minds of those around him. He does not receive the confidences of others because he does not give his confidence to them, and so he goes through a world which reflects his own way of treating it. He thinks it a cold, uncongenial, solitary place, where men may brood over their sorrows and enjoy their lonely joys, but where they must not expect much in the way of intimate companionship. And yet others find it a very different place - radiant with human kindness, warmed with loving sympathy, and enriched with manifold friendships; the barriers of reserve go down on all sides before them; people cannot resist their frankness and genial good-nature. Each of these men makes his own world. It is not that the lot of one is cast amongst uncongenial, and the lot of the other amongst congenial people, but that each finds people to a very large extent as he meets them.

Coldness chills those whom warmth draws out and expands, It is not the fault of the earth that under the leaden skies and blighting frosts of winter it brings forth neither fruit nor flowers, The movements and growth of life are checked from without, under the first breath of spring it awakens and responds. So it is with the world of men, they are responsive with a superlative sensitiveness to that which they meet in others. A hard, domineering bully who frightens people into submission has a contempt for those whom he has forced to hide from him all the finer side of their nature. He has nothing in him to draw it out, and he ends in not believing in its existence. Yet it is all there to be shown to any one who will take the trouble to draw it out.

God be thanked, the meanest of His creatures has two
soul sides,
One to face the world with, one to show a woman when
he loves her.

Every one knows how different he is with some people from what he is with others; how some, quite unconsciously, shut

him up within himself, how with others he is at his very best. There are dormant in every human being possibilities of various kinds, good and bad, which are blighted or developed by the people amongst whom they are thrown, I do not of course mean that this in any sense affects our responsibility in matters of right and wrong, but it is certainly true as regards the development of character and the unfolding of our gifts. Many a man would have been very different if the influences that surrounded his childhood and youth had been different. There are men with talents undeveloped, with powers that would have done good to their day and generation, unknown and unused through the self-distrust begotten by discouragement. Under more genial influences the world would have been the richer for their lives. I believe there are few whose whole view of life has not been affected by the stern or kindly influences of their early childhood, which threw them in upon themselves in timidity and reserve, or drew them out in genial confidence and sympathy with their fellow-creatures.

It is an interesting and instructive thing to listen to the criticism of two or three men upon 'the same people; one can scarcely believe that it is the same people who are being criticised. They are the same people, but each man not only sees them in a different light, but for the moment draws out different sides of their character.

What a different world it looks to us all. We argue and try to lead others to see people as we do, but before they can do that they must be what we are. We make our own world, full of the kindness or unkindness, of the good or bad, of the love or hate which we bring to bear upon it.

Now it is upon this sensitive responsiveness of human nature that the Beatitude is based. "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." "Go out," it says, "into

the world, with your heart full of gentleness and pity, and you will find the response of kindness from others; you will not only protect yourself from being hardened, but you will draw out the gentler side of others."

But while it is quite true that each man makes his own world, draws out for the moment one side or other of the people with whom he is thrown and sees the best or worst of them as the case may be, yet this of course is not the whole truth. There is existing in the world a vast and terrible amount of evil. The gentlest and kindest of men, though they may personally experience little that is not good in those who are brought under the magic spell of their own loving hearts, know full well the evil that is in the world - none have known it better than the Saints. And evil can undoubtedly take very attractive forms, and can even make those who yield to its influence attractive. But it can also be very repulsive and loathsome and very hard to bear. And we have to deal with evil not in the abstract but in the concrete. We have to come in daily contact, into close intercourse with those upon whom evil has laid its disfiguring hand.

But it may be said, whatever the defects of our own day, it is certainly not wanting in the spirit of mercy, Indeed it might be considered one of its most marked characteristics. It is the age of tender-heartedness and pity. There are societies of all sorts formed for carrying out works of mercy and kindness to man and beast, societies for prevention of cruelty to children and to animals, anti-vivisection societies, etc. The age of cruelty is passed away, and under the more civilising influences of our time the age of mercy has taken its place. The human heart has become so sensitive that it cannot bear even the punishment of the guilty, and however great the criminal and however outrageous his crime, the sufferings that he has cost to others is forgotten in the wave of unhealthy sentiment that is awakened at the thought of

his bearing the penalty of his sins, There is certainly no lack of pity amongst us today.

Yet it is well to bear in mind that a characteristic which seems to be a virtue is not really a virtue, unless it forms an essential part of the character as a whole, acting not merely under certain circumstances and with certain people, but always and with every one. A man is not charitable who loves his own friends but is indifferent to others, nay, he is not charitable if he is wanting in love to one individual; charity to be a virtue must be universal, it must be a characteristic of the person. So one would not call a man patient who was ever so patient in public life but irritable at home. Or broad-minded and tolerant who sympathised with every form of misbelief or unbelief, but was fiercely intolerant of dogmatic faith. Such partial and limited characteristics are to be found in every one; they are not necessarily the outcome either of effort or grace, they are merely the expression of natural inclination. A virtue to be such in the Christian sense of the word, must be universal in its operation and have its roots in the person.

And so it is with mercy. One may be very merciful in one's judgments upon those who fail in some ways, and very unmerciful on those who fail in others. Many people are quite pitiless towards those whose temptations are not their own. Again one may be full of pity and toleration of the faults of those one loves, and absolutely intolerant of those one does not love. A man may be the most gentle man in the world towards those who are near and dear to him, and positively cruel to others. One who is pitiless or cruel to one person has not the virtue of mercy.

And it is not at all uncommon to find such partial exercise of mercy. There are those who display a morbid and sickly compassion towards the sufferings of animals who are

entirely unmoved by the sufferings of their fellow-creatures. Many a woman shows infinitely more tenderness and care and compassion for her dog than she does for her overworked and uncared-for servants. It is well to tell such people plainly that their morbid sensitiveness and unhealthy affections have nothing whatever to do with the Christian virtue of mercy. Such people are, in fact, often not merciful at all, but cruel.

Cruelty, unkindness, indifference to the sufferings of one of God's creatures, be it man or beast, destroys the virtue of mercy, or rather discloses the fact that it does not exist. Where the mercy of the Beatitude exists, it exists as an essential element of character, to be called forth by every or any form of sorrow or suffering or trouble with which it is brought in contact. It acts not upon certain kinds of suffering, or certain people, or under certain circumstances; it does not cut up the creatures of God into departments, pitying and feeling for some, but pitiless towards others. It is universal. It has only to see what is pitiful to feel pity. The person endowed with this virtue is one who always and everywhere displays it. It is a personal characteristic, making the whole man throughout his whole being sensitive, gentle, easily moved to compassion, whether to friend or foe, to man or beast. The whole character is softened by it. The man is pitiful and compassionate, no element of hardness or unkindness is to be found in him. This is a very different thing from the spurious forms of mercy that are so common around us, and that so often bring this great virtue into contempt, displaying itself in sentimental emotion and not seldom in moral weakness. Such unworthy imitations bring a blessing neither upon those who display them nor upon those upon whom they are exercised.

And yet the very existence of these spurious forms of the mercy of the Beatitude bear witness to the fact that the virtue itself is not as simple a one as we might imagine. It very easily degenerates into weakness and softness, an excusing of what is definitely wrong, often a condoning of sin in compassion for the sinner. A mercy that from pity to man will tamper with the character and moral attributes of God is a mercy that in the long run must bring a curse rather than a blessing. The Catholic is put into the world to be the salt of the earth, the light of the world, the leaven that is to quicken the whole mass with the principles of Divine truth and holiness.

It were better for the world, if such a thing were possible, that no pity should ever be shown to man than that the principles of morality and Christian virtue should be tampered with, out of a false conception of mercy. When God revealed Himself to Moses on the Mount He revealed Himself as "the Lord God, merciful and gracious, patient and of much compassion, who will by no means clear the guilty". On the cross mercy and truth met together. If it was the most perfect display of the infinite compassion of God towards the sinner, it was also an awful revelation of the grievousness of sin.

It would be but false mercy on God's part to allow men to believe that His law could lightly be tampered with. God is all-holy, and His love and compassion towards sinful man cannot lead Him to condone sin or to lower the moral standard to suit man's weakness. No sin can be forgiven till the sinner is penitent, that is, takes an attitude of antagonism towards sin, comes over in heart, however weak his will, to the side of the all-holy God. The infinite pity of God, the love displayed upon the Cross, great though it be, cannot pardon the impenitent, cannot bend the moral law and lower the standard of the world to save one person who

still remains on the side of sin. The God who is full of compassion and mercy, is the God who is the hater of iniquity. However great His mercy it cannot mar the lustre of His holiness. It would be a moral disaster to the world if it did. Had God revealed to man only His infinite mercy and not His holiness, men would have gone on sinning with impunity in the belief that God was too merciful to punish sin, that His love was colourless and unmoral. He would have been treated as a father is treated by his wayward son, who knows that his love for him is too weak to resist his entreaties, and whose love only makes him more wanton and exacting.

The Cross stands out in the centre of Christendom as the Revelation of God's love and holiness, yet in the face of that ever-present Revelation it is hard enough for man to realise the evil of sin and the holiness of God, What would the moral condition of the world have been without it? It is not as easy a thing as it seems for God to teach man the moral character of His mercy. That it would not be for his good but for his ruin if mercy were separated from justice. Even in the conduct of the State a mercy that would overshadow justice would be its ruin - "Stet justitia ruat coelum".

The mercy therefore of which the Beatitude speaks, and upon which it utters a blessing, is the human counterpart of the mercy of God, It is a mercy penetrated with morality. A mercy aflame with the love of holiness, born of the love of the Holy One. However tender, pitiful, compassionate towards the sinner, it is instinct with justice and the sense of the hatefulness of sin. It is strong on the side of God and right. It can stoop very low, to the most degraded, the most sin bespattered, to those whom sin has trodden in the very mire, but it stoops with pity to raise them. It sympathises with the sinner, it never shows a particle of sympathy with sin. It keeps the lustre of its garments unstained while it

walks through the haunts of vice and lives in an atmosphere hot and weighted with the fever of sin. It shines in the darkness and gives light to them that sit in darkness and the shadow of death to guide their feet into the way of peace. It is therefore composed of two elements blended in perfect proportion - justice and compassion; justice alone may degenerate into hardness, compassion alone into softness and weakness, Blended together, justice gives tone and strength to compassion, and compassion takes the edge off justice. Mercy is therefore perfectly just and true and firm and strong. There is in it the perfect blending of tenderness and strength. It does not close its eyes to the reality and greatness of the evil, while it is full of tenderness to the evil-doer. None can speak more strongly of the grievousness of sin and of its terrible penalties than the merciful man. None sees with clearer eyes the real condition of things about him. Those to whom he shows mercy know full well that they cannot deceive him, that he is not a weakling with whom they can play tricks. He can condemn with fiery words what ought to be condemned and expose fraud with scorn. He can seem to those who do not know him even hard, though in fact there is no hardness in him.

For this mercy is not the mere natural pity of one man for another, It is supernatural. It is born of the soul's union with God, The springs of its life are rooted in God Himself. It is the compassion, therefore, of a person essentially holy. And poor sinful man striving after holiness finds this gentleness and pity well forth from its holy source, From this source alone it can find its origin and preserve its purity and its strength. If it breaks away from it, it sinks down into all the frailty and weakness of mere human pity that can be swayed and moved and blinded by emotion, sentiment and ignorance. It loses its force and fibre, its Divine insight into the truth of things, it is no longer kindled with the light of justice, and may become a source of moral weakness, an instrument of

evil rather than of good. We know but too well how much is said and done today in the name of mercy to lower the moral tone of Christians, Men are not supposed to be able to rise to the standard that has been kept before them for 2,000 years either of morals or of doctrine, and a weak and spurious mercy stretches forth its hands and tampers with the teaching and revelation of our Lord. Such mercy, though it be applauded for a moment, in the long run neither blesses nor is blest.

How then shall those who would go forth into the world so full of suffering and sorrow and above all so full of sin, keep unsullied and in the fulness of its vigour the Christian virtue of mercy.

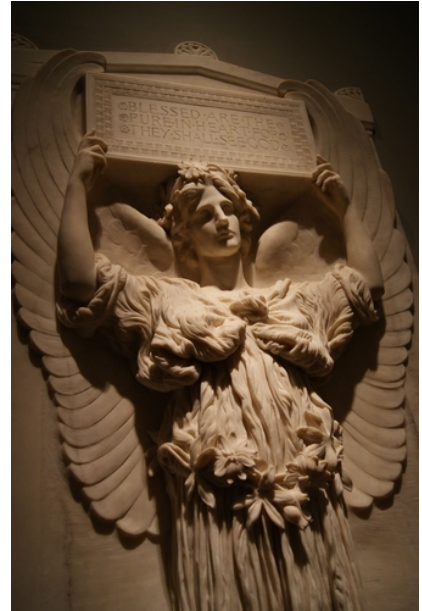
1. They must ever be striving to see things in the light of God. To remember that even God's love is the fruit of His holiness. That "our God is a consuming fire" however pitiful, compassionate and loving He is, and that in all our considerations of life, God must ever come first.

2. At the same time and as the outcome of this they must strive to cultivate pity and gentleness for all forms of suffering, and especially for those suffering under the slavery of sin, loving and pitying the sinner, however repulsive the sin. It is easy to sympathise with those whose sufferings and sins are the same as our own, but we must try to enter into the sufferings of those with whom we naturally feel no sympathy, even as our Lord did, for "we have not a High Priest who cannot have compassion on our infirmities, but one tempted in all things like as we are, without sin". It is indeed those whose lives are most like His in purity and holiness, whose sympathies are strongest and widest, being unblunted by sin.

3. And this can be done by contemplating God's goodness and mercy in our experience of His dealings with ourselves, Then, if we have sinned and repented, we see how mercy and truth have met together, justice and peace have kissed each other. If God can love me, so each of us must feel, whom can He not love? If God can pardon me, whom can He not pardon? The only sin we know in all its malice is our own, for we can see against what light and love it was committed. The love of God which we can alone fathom in all its length and breadth and depth and height is the love which He has shown to us. And we know that His love towards us was a love instinct with justice, demanding penitence and renewal of life, and leaving behind the suffering which sin has brought, to cleanse and purify the soul and unite it with Himself. We experience in our own persons the reconciliation of mercy and truth, the kiss of justice and peace, and this experience which outreaches all knowledge attained by theological studies or the teaching of the wisest and the best, sends us out into the world to show mercy to all men, and to assist in raising the poor out of the dust and the beggar from the dunghill to set them amongst the princes, even amongst the princes of the people, and to gain for ourselves the fullness of the blessing of the Beatitude, "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy".

Blessed are the Clean of Heart for They Shall See God

There is no greater mistake nor one fraught with more fatal consequences than to defend what one conceives to be the honour of God at the cost of the realities of life. Yet it is not uncommon for devout persons to argue *a priori* as to what they conceive God should do rather than as to what He actually does or permits, Job's comforters sought to console him by pressing upon him a theory of God's government of the world, which his experience had proved to him to be contrary to facts; indeed the sufferings which he was enduring were permitted in order to clear his mind from the baneful influence of the very theory they were pressing. A faith that can live only under the shelter of ignorance, or by closing our eyes to the visible realities around us, will not be of much avail when we are brought face to face with the stern and perplexing facts of life. We may be confident that a faith which is to be defended at the expense of truth is not itself true and is not worth defending.



The Revelation that God has given us of His own character, is the Revelation of the moral attributes of Him who is the Creator and Ruler of the world in which we live. This world with all its perplexing problems we are meant to know and study, the Revelation if true cannot be in antagonism to what we see and know. We shall never be called upon, in the interests of Revelation, to close our eyes to what we see, or to deny what we know to be true. The instructed Catholic

faces and studies life fearlessly, with the certainty that, though he may find much that he cannot explain or understand, he will find nothing that is contrary to what is revealed to faith.

Now whatever may be our theories of what God ought in justice to do for man, it is beyond question that there are many whom to all appearance He has placed in circumstances that seem almost to ensure their failure. Things are against them, and they have not the courage or the power, or whatever it is that is needed, to rise above or through them, If only circumstances had been a little less unfavourable, nay, less absolutely against them, if they had had one good chance, many a man's life would have been very different. We see men like swimmers battling bravely against the currents, and at last yielding, exhausted, to a force that is to all appearance too strong for them.

Of course we cannot see into another's heart, we can but judge from what we do see, illuminated by what we know from our own experience. No doubt we ought to have so firm a grasp upon the Hand of Christ that however the waves and storms may be against us we are safe, But we poor creatures of destiny, knowing life as we see it and feel it, know well the awful strength of the things that are seen, and how dim and uncertain in the storm and stress appear the things that are not seen.

Indeed our Lord Himself tells us how strong is the force of circumstance, and how with other opportunities men would have been better: "Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works that have been done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they had done penance long ago in sackcloth and ashes."

Things then, according to our Lord's own words, were not as favourable for the inhabitants of the cities of Tyre and Sidon as they were for those of the cities of Galilee in His time. No doubt the men of Tyre will not be judged either by the standard or opportunities of the men of Chorazin and Bethsaida. And no doubt if we could look into the hearts of men, we should find how each of those who have gone down under the pressure of circumstances had his chance, the offers of grace, and felt perhaps the first movements of another current that would have counteracted the pressure of the forces around him. But who can tell? Each has but his own experience to go upon from which he can judge of all that is for and against his victory over outer things. And such knowledge can but fill us with charity in our judgments of those who go under and are carried along in the mighty stream of circumstance.

Yet I suppose that there is no one who has failed but knows that at least he need not have failed as badly as he did, and can see in looking back, calls and opportunities to which if he had corresponded the results would have been very different.

But when we have said all, we can only feel that the whole thing is a mystery; that if men demand an explanation it cannot be given at least on this side of the grave, and that we can but cling to two things of which we Catholics at least are absolutely certain. First, that God is just, and demands of no man more than He gives him the power to do, That He judges men therefore by no hard and fast rule or standard, but gives due weight to every consideration of place, circumstances, temperament and training, That the man with the one talent was not condemned because he did not do the work of the man with five, but because he did not do what a man with one talent could and ought to have done. "Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee." His own paltry

excuses formed the materials upon which his judgment was based. And secondly, we know that God is love, and wills not that any should perish, but that all should be saved; and that love does not see the worst in those that are loved but the best, does not scrutinise everything that is done to see if it can find ought to condemn, but rather to commend, and that we are to be judged at the last day not by an enemy, but, if I may say so, a lover, and that He judges rather by what is aimed at than by what is accomplished. And we may recall with consolation the words of Saint John: "If our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart and knoweth all things".

But there are times when it seems as if God Himself places us in difficulties - difficulties under which, alas! many fail. When it would be impossible without unfaithfulness to the known Will of God, or the claims of religion, to avoid entering upon some position full of danger and temptation. Saul was called by God to be the first King of Israel, and it proved his ruin, Judas was called to be an Apostle - "Have I not," said our Lord, "chosen you twelve" - and failed utterly. And we know no doubt in our own experience not a few who were doing very well in an ordinary course of life, but were forced from the very highest motives, and in obedience to the evident Will of God, into a more important position of responsibility and danger where they made shipwreck of their lives.

I think in such cases it is helpful to remember this - that such failures cannot be attributed so readily as it seems to the mere fact of the change of position and surroundings, but probably to some inherent weakness of character, or some fault which the more sheltered life failed to bring to light or to remedy, But it was there, and for the development and sanctification of the soul it was necessary that it should be dealt with. We are not placed on earth to be sheltered

from temptation, but to be tried and proved and developed. "My son," says the wise man, "if thou wilt seek the Lord, prepare thine heart for temptation." The Psalmist who had entered into the Mind of God, cries "Try me, O God, and seek the ground of my heart, prove me and examine my thoughts, look well if there be any way of wickedness in me". He asks not for shelter but testing.

Now it generally happens that after a certain time we get all that can be got out of the place and circumstance in which we find ourselves. We need, like a tree that has not room to grow, to be transplanted. We might live on the rest of our lives where we are, and never do anything very bad or very good, But we should never get to know ourselves better, or to do the real work of life. There are in us probably faults of character which only need circumstances to bring to light. The character has capacities for good and evil which must be tested. Our present position has done for us all it could, we must pass on. A boy learns all that one tutor can teach him and he goes to another; perhaps one of the first lessons he learns from the change is how ignorant he is of many things. Most lads who have been brought up at home and have never had the rough handling and healthy criticism of school, lose something which it is difficult to gain in later life, They have been sheltered, no doubt, but they have not got either the knowledge of themselves or the true proportion and perspective of life that they would have gained, and ought to have gained, in the time of preparation.

Thus, having learnt the lessons that are to be learnt in one position we are called to another; we must either go on or stagnate, we can grow no more where we are, There are risks, perhaps great risks, in the change, but we must face them; there are more than risks, though of a different kind, in staying where we are.

And so it happens that the Providence of God leads many a man backwards and forwards, hither and thither, from this position into that - from a position of dependence to one of responsibility; from a sheltered home to a place alive with risks and danger; from crowds to solitude, or solitude to crowds; from a place where every privilege and help of religion can be had to one where he is thrown alone upon God without even the Sacraments, - and all this that the character may be tested, proved and rounded off on all sides, and every fault and weakness brought to light, and if so be, corrected.

Such a process is no doubt full of risks and fraught with danger, and under its strain many fail, but be it always remembered that the man who fails by some positive failure before the eyes of the world and under great difficulties and temptations may be no worse, nay, may be much better, than the man whose whole life has been a slinking away from danger and responsibility, a sheltering himself behind others, a refusal to face things - whose failures have been perhaps rather negative than positive, if sloth and cowardice and selfishness be negative. It is better to know our weaknesses and faults than to have them and not know them, better, may I say, to fail in the midst of noble effort than not to fail because there has been nothing either noble or involving effort in the whole life.

Now the Beatitude of the clean of heart brings this out.

The former Beatitude developed in the soul that characteristic which draws out the best side of men, and keeps back all that is most harsh and cruel, The merciful obtain mercy, and see the world at its best. And yet its business is in the world. This kindly and gentle nature is not to cloister itself. On the contrary, it is to live amongst men, and men who in its presence put forth all that is best in

them. And we know what an attractive place the world is even when it shows us a very ugly side; what a spell it casts upon us; how hard it is, even when it turns its back on a man or woman and treats them with a cruelty of which it alone is capable, how hard it is to resist its fascination.

And into this world the Catholic is sent to make it more attractive still! to draw out, if it be but for a moment, that spirit of mercy towards others of which it is so much in need. He is not - unless because of some special vocation - to come out from the world and leave it to sink in its own corruption. On the contrary, the Catholic is to act as the leaven that is to mix with the heavy dough to quicken and energise it with a new life. The wheat is to grow in the midst of the tares; the wise and foolish virgins are side by side. The Church is to mix with the world, to impregnate it with her principles, and to overcome the evil that is within it by good.

And what is the Church in this sense of the word, as mixing in the social, political, mercantile world, but individual, often isolated Catholics, A priest cannot go and preach in a ball-room or on the Stock Exchange. But those Catholics whose position in life places them there can preach if not by word at least by conduct. It is thus that they act as the salt of the earth and the light of the world.

But such a position is fraught with serious danger, lest, instead of converting others they should themselves be converted to the ways of the world, made more beautiful, if but for the moment, by their presence. Yet this danger is not to be escaped from by shirking duty, and the mere cowardly flight from difficulties, There are lessons to be learnt, characteristics to be developed, tests to which the soul is to be put there and there only. Fly from the position in which God has placed you and the duty He has given you to do,

and you fail of the testing and development you can get there alone, you escape one danger by exposing yourself to another and a greater.

Therefore this Beatitude follows: "Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God". Blessed are those who living in the midst of the world keep their standards unsullied and undimmed by all the lowering influences around them.

Now there are broadly speaking two classes of persons to whom this is specially difficult.

1. There are those who have the natural gift of sympathy, whose natures are widely open to all the currents and influences of human life, who delight to live in the midst of their fellow-creatures, and to feel about them the movements of life and the contact of others, They are open and easy of access, and easy to get on with; people who at once win your confidence, and even before they open their lips make you feel that you would find no difficulty in speaking to them.

2. And there are others who are self-contained and reserved, who, if they have deep feelings and are deeply moved have the misfortune of not being able to let others see it. Whatever may be going on beneath the surface, the surface is calm and cold and sometimes repellent. Often indeed such persons inwardly are very different, they long to break through the barriers and get out. Strong emotion, deep feeling, intense excitement cannot find utterance, they are expressed in awkward words that leave a false impression. What they long to say freezes upon their lips and sounds hopelessly inadequate in their own ears, The fire that is in their hearts dies cold and chilled when they would give it expression. Sometimes some little natural defect, awkwardness of manner, timidity or shyness, holds them

back from a life they long to live, and from intercourse with those whom they long to know. It is all there, a very volcano of feeling and intensity. But they pass amongst men as chilling, unsympathetic, inhuman.

Now each of these class of persons living in the great world has his own special difficulties in keeping his heart pure from the lowering influences amidst which his lot is cast.

It is one thing to classify sins in the cold catalogue of words. It is a very different thing to see these sins committed by men and women who are nothing if they are not charming, attractive and refined.

For instance, you know that insincerity is a very odious thing, that an insincere person is one who never can be trusted and ought never under any circumstances to be encouraged. And yet with this knowledge clear before your mind you spend a delightful half-hour talking to a person who scarcely takes the trouble to conceal his insincerity, saying things to please you which you know are not true and which neither he nor you believes, And thinking it over you have to convince yourself again that all this charming unreality is really as much a sin against truth as a vulgar lie told you by a beggar in the street. Uncharitable words we know are wrong - we are warned against them in the Gospels, their sinfulness is impressed upon us in all the spiritual books; it is very wrong to pick your neighbour's, character to pieces. But when it is done in a very amusing way and with a keen sense of the ridiculous, and withal by a person who is refined and sympathetic, it is difficult to feel that there is much harm in it. The brilliantly clever and daring way in which some of my ideals were treated in a light conversation, half-banter and half-earnest, by a man or woman of the world who showed experience and a knowledge of the world in the turn of every phrase, hid the

subtle poison that flowed through it all, and made me feel for the first time somewhat behind the times, and as if my ideals were a little stultified and old-fashioned.

We know well as Catholics the sacredness of the marriage law and the strong condemnation by our Lord of those who put away the partner of their marriage and marry another. But when one very near and dear to us, under shelter of the law of the land, violates the law of God and lives openly in legalised adultery, and when we meet such a person and find to our astonishment that she does not seem to have deteriorated in other ways, and is recognised by the world as one living in the lawful state of matrimony, it is difficult to realise that the wrong is just the same as though it had not the shelter of the law. That the sin is no less odious than if it were flaunted beneath the gas lamps of the street with all the squalid misery of painted cheeks and shabby finery.

Sins interpreted in terms of human personality, and often a very charming personality, quickly become transformed. I think most of us know one or two persons who, for the moment at least, could take the ugliness out of almost any sin and give it a certain graciousness. Words spoken by human lips sound very different from those same words upon the cold page of a book. Life, personality, passion, breathe through them and seem to burn out the inherent coarseness and vulgarity of their bald meaning. Good women will marry men whom they know to be thoroughly bad; the badness which in the abstract they would fiercely resent, they more than condone in the concrete. We often hear it said, "I like so and so in spite of his faults," and yet it would be well within the truth to say, "I like even his faults, nay, I like him because of his faults". He has a way of making his faults attractive.

It is true, we all know it and feel it. Sin considered in itself as a violation of the law of God and of our own nature is an ugly thing, but in the concrete, and revealed in the charming atmosphere of an attractive personality, it is very different. There are diseases, often loathsome and deadly, which give an added beauty and refinement to their victims. The autumn leaf has a splendour of its own, and the setting sun in the fierce glory of its decline attracts many who would be unmoved by the chaste beauty of its rising, And sin is death - moral and spiritual death. And therefore for those who are naturally sympathetic there is a danger from constantly living in the society of people whose aims and standards are so different from their own. They see and hear things done and said in the easy and pleasant manner of those about them that in the quiet of their own room their conscience condemns, Are these things really so bad as they were taught to believe? Are they not a little prudish? Are they to cultivate the spirit of a prig and condemn what is done by men and women who are in many ways far better than themselves?

We read the Decalogue, and its interpretation and application by our Lord, and we see the men and women who in their faulty way try to obey it. We know nothing of the inner struggle, the brave efforts, the penitence for the many failures. We see only the result. A character full of inconsistencies; here and there some fair virtue in a very worthless and tarnished setting, a person who seems to be constantly hampered by an over-anxious conscience, and one not very comfortable to live with. And then we see others who go with the currents that are around them, who never protest, never are shocked, but fall in with perfect ease with the ways and lives of the easy-going world, who have a pleasant smile for the weaknesses of human nature, and do not ask or expect much from it as long as it keeps itself within the limits of decency. The natural human

sympathy, which is a thing most good in itself, one of the great attributes of our Lord, tends to soften our judgments not merely of the people who do these things, which is quite right, but of the wrong things that are done.

How can an abstract cold standard have a chance against living types of character. How can Moses with his Law written on two tables of stone, even though they be written by the Finger of God, stand against Aaron and the daughters of Israel dancing round the golden calf. No wonder that he threw them from him in despair and broke them to atoms. The cold chaste standards of a rigid orthodoxy, whether in doctrine or manners, has a poor chance in presence of the warm palpitating life of human beings who to all appearance get on so well without them. Surely God should have known His world better.

And then there are the other class. Those who are not or who cannot show that they are sympathetic, living in the midst of the world, yet shut out from its intimacy by the barriers of their unconquerable reserve. It is impossible to live in constant intercourse with people and not be influenced by them in some way. The mere presence of another person in the room cannot be ignored, or treated as one would treat a piece of furniture. Somehow it affects us, we feel it all over. A silent person in the room gets on one's nerves. We want to break the silence to find some point of contact. We feel as if two persons thrown together for any length of time ought to be in some sort of communication with one another, the solidarity of the human race demands it. And if there be no intercourse there are mysterious actions of one upon the other that operate like mesmeric currents and attract or repel or set up a kind of psychic irritation.

And this, and far more than this, is felt in a crowd of people. A crowd fills the air with sympathy and creates a mysterious

atmosphere of its own. We become moved and excited in a crowd as we are nowhere else. Reserve seems thrown aside, the air is charged with electricity,

Now those who are daily living under such circumstances, in the midst of people whom they are constantly thrown with, and yet shut out from, because of their shyness or reserve must suffer keenly from their exclusion.

It will either make them bitter, cynical, more aloof; they will find themselves constantly passing judgment upon those who say and do things that they would give the world to be able to say and do; or it will make them in their desperation, daring and reckless. They cannot merely stand apart and find pleasure in the enjoyment of others. They get to hate them for having what they have not, or they are prepared to do anything to be as they are.

I think there is no one capable of such daring, perhaps even of such badness, as the woman who wants to throw herself into the tumultuous life around her and is held back by the fact that she has not the natural gifts that would bring her to the front. The restraints that she chafes against, the things that she sees and hears, and interprets perhaps as even worse than they are, all prepare her for a reckless plunge when she gets the chance. If she has been religiously brought up she revolts against the standards which she tries to imagine hold her back. The beauty and easy ways of human life from which she is shut out, rouses in her a fierce antagonism against what she considers the narrow lines of her training, and her rebellious and bitter spirit throws them to the winds and tears them to tatters at the first chance she gets.

Verily if the Church is the training place for holiness and the Vision of God, the world with its cheery disregard for all that

is serious, and its easy standards and its broad toleration and its appearance of refinement even in what is immoral, is the enemy of God.

Yet it cannot be left to itself and its corruptions, The claims of duty call multitudes of Catholics into it. Indeed the one breakwater against the ever-rising tide of sin and complete disregard of God and His commandments is the presence of the Church in her midst.

Therefore the great danger to those who know the truth and the right and are constantly in contact with those whose ways and standards are different, is that of losing tone, of feeling that after all we must take things as we find them, and that Catholics are apt to be too rigid and a little narrow in their judgments of men and things, and that it is a good thing for them to rub shoulders with men and women who think and act differently. But they do not see that this often means that the salt loses its flavour and is trodden under the feet of men.

How then is it possible for them to live in the midst of all this lowering atmosphere and to keep themselves unspotted from the world?

One thing I think is clear, No mere abstract standard of right and truth can hold out for long against the overwhelming influence of human life when it is not gross, but on the contrary when, even in its vices, it is cultivated and refined, and repudiates as much as any Catholic, though from different motives, all that is vulgar and degrading in sin. What chance can law have in comparison with life? Or the cold voice that forbids and commands, against the warm radiating influences that flow forth from living beings, throbbing with vitality. Who does not know the dissolving effect of a well-loved voice and presence upon a resolution

formed in the solitude of one's own chamber? Who has not experienced how quickly the piercing voice of conscience can be argued into silence if it be only for one fatal moment? "It is not good for man to be alone"; the law of his nature compels him to form companionships and friendships, and these are, for good or evil, the strongest influences upon his life.

How then can men find an influence strong enough to counteract the lowering effect of the moral tone which surrounds them?

There is but one way. Personal influence must be met by personal influence. Nothing else is strong enough or real enough. A law will not do, it must be a person. Many a character has been strengthened and transformed by a noble friendship which gave a concrete and living expression to the hazy ideals that were not strong enough to counteract the surrounding influences.

We need to see the beauty of goodness in order to realise the ugliness of sin, in however seductive a form it may clothe itself. We need the vision of human life, as God designed it, that we may be dissatisfied with what man has made it. But not a vision drawn by some artist's hand or described by some great writer, but one that is alive and close to us, with whom we can hold communion and live in closest friendship, one who is wholly free from all those weaknesses and idiosyncrasies which mar and disfigure the beauty of holiness, It is only a Living Being that can counteract the mighty currents of the life that surges around us at full tide. It is only a human heart that can break the spell of human influence that drags us down. The fair and noble Form of the central Figure of the Gospel, drawn however vividly upon the page of a Book, bidding the weary and heavy laden come to Him for rest, is not enough. The

Voice grows dim and inarticulate when heard amidst the living voices around us singing with passion and excitement, the Form seems cold and pale and ghostlike compared with those of warm flesh and blood which press upon us on all sides.

We need more than this, we need the living Presence of Him of whom the Gospels speak, alive and close to us today, to Whom we can turn in the hour of need, Whose influence we can feel more potent than that of any one on earth.

And this is given us in the Person of our Lord. The centre, the life, the mainspring of the Christian Faith.

And yet we are so used to the attraction of imperfect humanity, that at first the character of a perfect man disturbs and disappoints us. We admire physical courage more than moral courage, a certain recklessness more than self-control, one who loves the things of this world more than one who is ready to sacrifice all for the Kingdom of Heaven's sake. We have so long associated certain faults, even grave sins, with our idea of manliness, that a sinless man seems almost unmanly. It is a shock to many a woman to find the man she loves innocent of certain sins; he seems to her lacking in virility. The Christian mother, it seems, would love her boy more if he struck back than if he turned the other cheek to the smiter.

For in every sphere we need an education to be able to appreciate the most perfect. In art and literature, as well as in character, the admiration of the multitude is given to what is within its reach, that which is faulty and imperfect. Perfection is at once a revelation and an education. Only those who have studied can appreciate the works of the great prophets, the great revealers of beauty.

And only those who study the life of our Lord and draw near to Him in close communion and intimate friendship see and know in Him the perfect beauty of moral perfection.

We need therefore to correct the false impressions of our experience in life by educating ourselves in another experience. To realise the marring effect of sin, by close intercourse with the perfect type of humanity - He who is "the chief amongst ten thousand and altogether lovely".

In Nature the impressions of the eye have often to be corrected by the deductions of reason. And in the spiritual life it is, if possible, even more so. The false impressions of life have to be corrected by the clear vision of faith. We need a Person to correct the influence of persons. A Person whose goodness is the most attractive the world has ever seen, to show us how deceptive and unreal is the attraction of that which is evil.

The whole ethical teaching of our Lord is, therefore, bound up with Himself. He did not come to promulgate a law, but to reveal a Character. Compare the Gospel with the old law and we see at once the difference. The law went into the minutest details, forbidding this and commanding that. There was scarcely a circumstance in the domestic, social and religious life of the Jews with which the law had not something to do, It said "do this and ye shall live". The ethical and spiritual teaching of our Lord is summed up in one brief sentence, "If thou wilt be perfect, follow Me".

They know little of human nature, its passions and its weaknesses who can imagine that the teaching of Christ can be separated from Himself, and that the exalted moral standard which He gave the world would long hold sway over men whose hearts were not touched by His love. It is not His teaching that changed the heathen world into the

Christian, it is Himself. "If ye love Me," He said, "keep My commandments." His love is at once the motive and the power of obeying His teaching. Let the Personal influence of our Lord be removed from the world, and His teaching will soon follow.

And the vivid realisation of His Person as a living object of love and source of power can only be kept alive by the faithful practice of religion. Our Lord in founding the Catholic Church knew human nature better than we know it ourselves. He knew that our nature is complex and must be reached in many ways and through many channels.

The great doctrine of the Incarnate Christ upon the throne of God, the Mediator and the Life of all His people, is like a priceless jewel set in precious stones, It is surrounded by other doctrines, devotions and practices, by which it is brought home to the minds of the faithful and kept alive in their hearts. And it would be within the truth to say that every one of these doctrines and devotions has this, and this alone as its end.

The minds of ordinary men are unable to hold for long the doctrine and purpose of the Incarnation bereft of all those truths and devotional practices which surround it and uphold it, and feed the mind and kindle the heart, and make it, acting through many channels, a living reality to them, The Blessed Sacrament upon the altar, the centre of devotion and the fountain of the Church's strength, forces upon men's minds, if they could forget it, the reality of our Lord's Humanity living still in all its perfection, and teaches us that the Incarnate God is our food. The Mass with all its sacred rites teaches the most unlettered the living efficacy of the Atonement, and brings its infinite power to bear upon each individual soul. The Sacrament of penance makes once more real to each penitent such scenes in the Gospel as

those in which our Lord pardons the Magdalene and says to the sinful woman, "neither do I condemn thee, go and sin no more," and promises Paradise to the penitent thief. The devotion to the Blessed Mother of God is not, as some would suppose a rival to the devotion to Her Son, it keeps before men the reality of the nature which He assumed.

Christ is in fact everywhere, and in every act of His Church - its central fire, its heart, its life, living for Him and by Him, and making His Presence a perennial source of power to the minds and hearts of His people.

And thus it is through the constant and faithful practice of their Religion that those who are called to live much in the world get the antidote to its poison, and the stimulant that strengthens them against the lowering influence of its moral atmosphere, They see the Beauty of Holiness in the Person of Jesus Christ, and the evil of sin in however charming a guise it may be presented. For through the practice of their religion our Lord is knit into their hearts and minds, and His Person stands out in bold relief against the background of the shifting scenes around them, "Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God." It is this purity of heart, this keeping unsullied the ideals of our faith, that fits the soul finally for the Vision of God. And it is only by ever keeping before us the Vision of God Incarnate that we can preserve this purity.

Blessed are the Peacemakers for They Shall be Called the Children of God

This Beatitude comes not at the beginning, but at the end. The office of the peacemaker is not one to be lightly assumed by a novice in the spiritual life. It needs a long preparation and training. It is the Beatitude of the spiritual diplomatist. And the office of the diplomatist demands no ordinary skill and self-discipline. Without a very clear knowledge of the principles at stake and more than the average knowledge of men the diplomatist is pretty sure to fail in his mission. And if this be true in earthly things, and when mere earthly ends are at stake, it is infinitely more true in spiritual things. Only he who has learnt the lessons of the preceding Beatitudes will be able to fulfill the delicate work committed to him in this.



Notice for one moment how they have trained him at every point.

In the Beatitude of poverty of spirit he has learnt to estimate things at their true value and to use them for their proper end. By meekness he has learnt inner self-control, By mourning, not to shrink from sorrow and suffering, but to gain through them comfort from on high. By hunger and thirst after justice, he has learnt to bring every part of his nature to subserve its true end, which is God. By mercy he has learnt to blend in perfect proportion compassion and justice. By purity of heart to keep before him amidst the

seductions of the world the true standards and aims of the Christian life.

And after this thorough training he is sent into the world as a peacemaker. A peacemaker who is to be blessed with the title not primarily of a Son of Man, which indeed he must be in the fullest sense of the word, but of the Child of God.

If we analyse the result of his training we shall find that it has taught him three things:

(1) That God must ever come first in the thoughts of man as his true end and the end of all created things; that God therefore must never be sacrificed for any one or any thing.

(2) He has learnt to know himself, and that he cannot live his true life without self-sacrifice and readiness to face difficulties whether interior or exterior without flinching.

(3) And he has learnt to know men, as no man can ever know them who does not love them and feel compassion for their infirmities.

Such is the stern and searching, yet withal loving school in which the Christian soul is prepared to fulfill his office as peacemaker in a world of strife and egotism, where men are at war with God, with themselves and with one another. He needs indeed to understand the principles at stake, to have himself well in hand, and to understand as well as to love the wayward and passionate nature of the men with whom he has to deal.

It need scarcely be asserted then that this is no Beatitude uttered on a natural temperament. On the kind of person who would do anything and surrender anything for peace. Such a character is often one of the most disturbing elements in life. Ready to surrender the most sacred

interests and the most important principles to escape the trouble they entail, Such people would do well to remember that there are such sayings in the Gospels as "I am not come to send peace upon the earth but the sword," and "Blessed are ye when all men shall revile you and speak evil of you falsely for My sake".

A lasting peace can only be made on the principles of justice and truth. And a war in the cause of justice is better than a peace patched up at the cost of principle. Peace is not the only thing worth having in life, either in one's own heart or in one's relations with one's own family, or with the world, Indeed I doubt if any one ever attained in his own heart that peace of God which passeth all understanding, till he had fought many a battle with himself and brought his rebellious nature under the dominion of conscience. There are women who give in to everything their husbands demand, however unjust, unreasonable and irreligious, for a peace that is not worth having. Many a mother, believing that the only way to keep hold of her son is by yielding to him in all that he demands, wonders that she seems neither to have held his affections nor to have kept her influence over him.

Therefore the easy-going lover of peace at any cost will find, not only that such peacemaking brings a blessing neither from God nor man, but that it is probably more difficult for him to bring himself under the law of the Beatitude than for one who is by nature a fighter. The fighter has in some ways the better instincts of the two, for he knows at least that there are things worth fighting for, and he is not afraid to face an opponent. He who is afraid of war will never be able to make a lasting peace.

Now the peacemaker of the Beatitude knows that he can make no terms with sin, nor with anything that is false or untrue. On this point there can be no surrender to gain the

whole world. In the former Beatitude he has learnt to keep his standards unsullied in the midst of all the lowering attractions of the world. If men are to be led to God it is not by lowering the standard of right to suit their weakness; if they are to be led to the truth, it must be by their effort to rise to the truth, not by tampering with or explaining away truths that seem unpalatable. Such compromises with the revealed standards of right and truth have been made on all sides by religious bodies outside of the Catholic Church; and we see the result - more and more must be surrendered to human passion or human weakness, till the religion of Christ becomes emasculated and enfeebled, its sterner side denied, its mysteries explained away, many of its doctrines abandoned. It would be a strange thing if the truths of Revelation, with their great demands upon men's hearts and wills, commended themselves at once to our lax and unsanctified nature. We naturally rebel against them. If they were not far above us they could not lift us up. It needs a discipline of the mind to be able to understand the things of God, as much as a discipline of the heart to love Him and a discipline of the will to obey Him.

The standards of Art are not lowered to meet the tastes of the unlettered mob, They are an education; they only appeal to those who have naturally an artistic temperament, or who have studied them and educated their minds so as to be able to appreciate and understand them. And so if the character and teaching of our Lord could appeal at once in all its beauty to men and women of sordid lives and earthly standards, it would not be an education. At first there are many things that disappoint us, as they did His Disciples. When He was challenged: "If Thou be the Christ, come down from the Cross and we will believe," I suppose some time or other most of us have felt that we could have wished He had come down and shown His Power. When He said again, "Wist ye not that I could even now pray to My Father and He would

send more than twelve legions of angels,' how we have wished that He had. How His enemies would have fled before His Face, and come back trembling to His Feet. It is only as we grow more spiritual, as our character becomes refined and purified, that we realise how much nobler and more perfect it was for Him to act as He did. Other men could not come down from their crosses and escape from their difficulties by the ministration of hosts of angels, and in assuming our nature He assumed the ordinary conditions of human life.

The deeper, therefore, the study of the Life of our Lord, not as an intellectual but as a spiritual study, the more we realise its transcendent beauty, its absolute perfection. Only as we try to follow His Example do we appreciate it. With lower standards and more vulgar ideals we may criticise it, find defects in it, think it a little tame. One critic finds that He was lacking in patriotism! that He was lacking in the sense of the ludicrous! As if He came from Heaven to teach men things they knew already. But as we seek to follow in His Footsteps we realise the faultless moral splendour that radiates from His Presence and transforms the lives of all who follow His example. We feel the truth of His words: "If thou wilt be perfect, take up thy cross and follow Me".

And it is the same with the Truths of Revelation. There are many doctrines which do not appeal to the ordinary mind, educated chiefly in the things of earth. How can a man believe in hell if he does not believe in sin, or if he does not believe in the Incarnation and the price that was paid for the world's Redemption. But in the lurid light which the cross throws upon sin it is not difficult to see how sin leads to hatred of God and of good. The doctrine of the Blessed Sacrament is the daily practical teaching of the words of our Lord: "As the Branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abide in the Vine, so neither can you, unless you abide in

Me". "As the living Father hath sent Me and I live by the Father, even so he that eateth Me shall live by Me." But how can men believe this who are aiming at no standard above their own reach, and doing nothing that they cannot do without the assistance of Grace, But those whose standard is the Life of Christ will find little difficulty in believing, nay - the first day of effort will show them that they cannot do what is above nature without a supernatural power, that to be Christlike, Christ must feed them with His own Life. That in the words of Saint Paul, the Gospel is "The *power* of God unto salvation". A supernatural power to enable us to live up to a supernatural standard.

It would not be difficult to show how closely inter-woven are all the doctrines of Revelation. How they all hold together and form one whole, like the stones of an arch. And that as by removing one apparently insignificant stone the strength and stability of the arch is destroyed and its final collapse is only a matter of time, so by surrendering one doctrine of the faith, its unity and coherence is destroyed, and it may be only a question of time how long it will hold any sway over the minds of men.

For instance, to many men in the present day the doctrine of the Resurrection of the Body seems to be one of little spiritual importance and of grave intellectual difficulty. Even if they grant the Resurrection of our Lord, the idea of the General Resurrection at the last day seems one that only burdens the mind with difficulty, placing it, as they say - untruly - in direct antagonism with the discoveries of modern science in regard to matter, and forming a picture which the educated imagination finds ludicrous and grotesque. Yet Saint Paul, ages before the birth of science, commits the Church to the position that in giving up the doctrine of the General Resurrection it surrenders the whole Christian Faith. "If," he writes to the Corinthians, "the dead

rise not, then is not Christ risen, and if Christ be not risen then is our preaching vain and ye are yet in your sins." Some of our modern teachers outside the Church do not seem to realise that in explaining away the Resurrection in order to remove difficulties to faith, and to be in line with scientific speculation, in the mind of Saint Paul they are giving up Christianity.

The doctrines of Revelation therefore are not to be accepted or rejected merely because they commend themselves or fail to commend themselves to the unsanctified intellect. They are intended to educate the mind, and they need at least a certain amount of moral and spiritual training to appreciate them. "Spiritual things are spiritually discerned." The carnal mind cannot understand the things of God.

And moreover it is not beyond the truth to say that every doctrine of the Faith has an influence of some sort on the formation and perfect development of character. Dogma acts as a mighty force behind the will, The man with one talent alleged as the reason for the failure of his life a conception of the Character of God which was in fact an utterly false one - he could not serve a God whom he believed to be unjust! A wrong idea in regard to the very subtle and difficult question as to the relation of man's free will to God's foreknowledge has warped the whole character of many a man, and has been the excuse to not a few for immorality and failure. Upon the doctrine of the Eternal Trinity, which seems an abstract and purely metaphysical one, depends our conception of the Love of God, whether Love be an accidental or essential attribute of the Godhead, with all its consequences upon the character of man.

Therefore any tampering with the doctrines of Revelation, however excellent the intention and however large the charity that prompts it, has a more far-reaching influence

upon life and character than is at first perceived. The surrender of one doctrine or one spiritual precept of our Lord may, in fact, have the result of producing quite a different type of character from that which He intended in founding His Church to teach and train souls. "Teaching them," as He said, "to observe all that I command you." What should we think of a man who strove to obey all the commands except one which he found too hard for him and deliberately violated. His character would be very different from that produced by obedience to the Ten Commandments.

Therefore the peacemaker who would seek the blessing of the Beatitude knows that it is better to set the world against him, to be hated of all men and falsely accused, than, for any apparent good or any immediate gain, to forfeit one jot or one tittle of the spiritual standard or dogmatic teaching of the Church. Our Lord warned us long ago to expect such treatment, and that misunderstanding would lead men to believe that in killing those who were faithful to Him they were doing God's service.

The rigidity and changelessness of the Catholic Church, in teaching what She claims to be Her mission to teach - the Truths of revelation - whether in fact She be mistaken or not; Her readiness to lose any number of Her followers rather than compromise what She believes to be the truth, instead of proceeding from a lack of charity, is in principle the very highest charity, and though it be no doubt a cause of strife and division, has within it the first and most essential characteristic of the peacemakers who are to be called the Children of God. She knows at any rate and teaches the world that there is such a thing as principle, and that She can never weigh numbers against Truth and Right. Her strength, and, if you like it, Her weakness is this unbending rigidity; She claims to have a message from God to give to men, a message with which She has no right or power to

tamper for the sake of any results however great. If men will accept it in its entirety, well and good; if not, She must leave them. And the result is that She presents to the world, torn and tossed with doubts and questionings, rent into bodies possessing more or less of the truth, one compact mass, bound together by one unchanging spiritual and doctrinal standard. If She is, as undoubtedly She is, the object of hatred and fear to many; if She is, and always has been, the source of many a bitter strife, the cause of many a schism, by Her unyielding consistency and fidelity to Her trust - She is at the same time the one true peacemaker, giving to vast multitudes peace with God, peace within their own hearts and a unity amongst themselves unknown to all the world.

And those of us who in our measure and degree would carry out the mission and gain the blessing of the peacemaker who is to be called the Child of God, must follow Her example and be firmly rooted in the conviction that for the sake of man there can be no compromise of right and truth - no tampering with the standards given by God; and that the price of peace may often be a long period of war, misunderstanding, antagonism, revolt.

But it is not enough to know the changelessness of the Truth of God. We must, if we would be peace-makers, know man also. If we know God in His holiness and purity, we must know man in all the frailty of his unstable nature. There are men, rigidly orthodox, uncompromisingly moral, who have little weight or influence with the world. People respect them, but do not love them, and still less feel inclined to follow them. They radiate forth a cold light that chills but never warms, Their influence for good is extraordinarily limited considering how upright and good they are. There are Catholics who would willingly die for the faith, who never in their lives won a single person to it, who have, on the contrary, repelled many from it. What is the matter with

such people? I think it is that they are intolerant not merely of wrong, but of the weakness and frailty of human nature. They do not understand its shiftiness and uncertainty, its paradoxes and compromises and inconsistencies. They are intolerant of the faults to which they have themselves no temptation. The strong do not understand the difficulties of the weak, the calm-tempered high-principled man of cold blood and few passions, scorns the poor shabby bespattered life and hopeless inconsistencies of one who is inwardly torn this way and that by the violence of conflicting passions. The sledge-hammer argument, "This is right, that is wrong; this is true, that is false - and there the matter ends. If you know a thing is wrong, why do you do it?" however unanswerable does not either convince or convert. There is something else that must be taken into consideration. The cry that utters itself from the lips of one who knew well the human heart: "The good that I would, I do not; the evil that I would not, that I do". "I cannot do the things that I would."

This is what such men fail to realise. They may know something of God, they may know much of truth and justice, uprightness and integrity, but they know little of men - of the struggles that precede, the remorse that follows, some grave sin, They judge things in the abstract.

And certainly the deed done, the words spoken can and must be so judged. The most charitable man in the world would be insincere if he tried to prove that a lie spoken, or an act of theft committed, were not in themselves wrong. But when it comes to the consideration of the person, it is very different. Many things may go to modify the moral guilt of the man who did the evil deed. The deed in itself, and the deed as done by the doer of it, demand very different judgments.

It is by no abstract law that men are to be judged, but with all due weight and consideration of circumstance, education, temperament.

The peacemaker therefore while keeping before him the lofty standard of his religion, needs also to know the material in which these standards are to be wrought out. He must know man as well as God. He must have learnt the lessons of the Beatitude of the merciful, as well as that of the pure in heart.

He knows that there can be no lowering of the ideals set before us by Christ, but he has learnt - ah, yes! in the school of his own bitter experience - how hard it is to rise to them, how great is the contrast between desire and attainment. And how long it takes even to kindle the desire in one who has failed deeply!

How then can he bring together God's high demands and man's stormy nature with his weakened will and dimmed spiritual vision?

This is the work of the spiritual diplomatist. And needless to say it is one demanding the utmost tact and the greatest delicacy of treatment, a combination of firmness and gentleness, an entire faithfulness to God and a knowledge of man that can be gained by nothing but by love.

He has at once to keep up the standard and to deal with great forbearance and patience with those whom he would lead onward in the service of God. Human nature emerging or trying to emerge from the fascination and slavery of sin is very easily frightened and discouraged. Men who have lived most of their lives in reckless self-indulgence and without a thought of God do not, as a rule, like or trust good people, and they know nothing about the power of religion; they

only feel that religion expects a good deal from them and that they have very little to give.

To ask much of such men in the way of prayer or the practices of the spiritual life would be ridiculous, they have no spiritual life. To set before them even a high moral standard would only frighten them away. Poor men, they are fighting naked passions and their own savage lusts; the beast within them which they have nourished for years is alive and awake and angry, crying out for food. How can one speak to such men of the great Christian virtues and of the holiness which God demands of His children? And yet it is impossible, even for the sake of such as these, to tamper with the law of God, or to permit, in the name of religion, what is wrong.

But the peacemaker, with the Divine love and patience which he has learnt from his Master, knows how to make the greatest sinner at once realise that the law of God must be obeyed, that sin is sin, and at the same time that God is infinitely patient and long-suffering with those who are trying, however feebly and with many failures, to do right. It is one thing to say that such and such sins must be permitted in certain cases; that human nature is too weak to resist them, and that you will only drive people away if you insist upon their being given up. But it is quite another thing to impress upon a man who is only just beginning to awaken to the claims of God upon his soul, what is wrong and must at least be struggled against, and at the same time to help him to realise God's infinite patience with those who are struggling. In the one case the standard of God is lowered and human nature weakened and degraded, in the other the standard is kept up and men are taught through many failures to strive after it.

And I think the Catholic Church succeeds in doing this as no other religious body even tries to do it. She can lead men on to the highest types of sanctity. She can train the contemplative in the ways of mystic prayer, and can teach Her great active orders to go forth into the world mingling with all sorts of people, yet true to their high vocation, with their loins girt, their lamps burning and they themselves like unto men that wait for the Bridegroom. And She can deal with the lowest and most degraded. She knows from whom to ask everything, and from whom to expect but little. Her religious demands upon Her children taken as a whole is very small - less than many other religious bodies. Many people outside the Church are scandalised at it. But what She demands, She demands not from a select few, not only from those who are what are called religious, but from all Her children; and what She demands She insists upon. In the few religious observances which She makes of obligation She is legislating for a vast multitude of people of all classes and types and nations, many of whom have neither time nor inclination for much prayer or church-going. It would be useless to ask much of many of them, and knowing the human heart She knows that it is far better to ask a little and insist upon it, than to ask much and get perhaps nothing.

All that is of obligation to every Catholic throughout the world is to go to Mass, which takes about half an hour, once on Sunday and a few of the greater festivals in the year; to go to Confession and Holy Communion at Easter, and to abstain from meat on Fridays, and to keep certain days as fasts; and in regard to these fasts She gives very liberal powers to Her priests to dispense those who from ill-health or work, or other good reason, would find it difficult to keep them. That is all that is of obligation. The minimum which is insisted upon for all. If a man went to Holy Communion every week day he is as much obliged to go to Mass on

Sunday as if he never went to church through the week. The rule is for all, the most religious as well as the least religious. Of course She encourages and advises a much higher standard for those who are capable of it. But this is all She commands and insists upon for all Her children, And no one can complain that it is too much, or that it is beyond his spiritual capacity. If too much were demanded a multitude of people would feel that they could not live up to it, and would not try to do the little that they could. She therefore puts the standard of religious observance upon which She insists well within reach of the weakest.

And so She leads many, who would otherwise be discouraged, on to higher things. She shows Her deep knowledge of human nature and its weakness in thus laying down laws of obligation to suit the weakest, not the strongest, the least devout, not the most devout. Other religious bodies deal primarily with the inner circle, They expect too much. The Catholic Church in Her wide view takes in the world, and She has regard to the hidden longings of the human heart, to the power of conscience, the mighty gift of faith, and the mystic attraction which Her churches, guarding as they do the living Presence of our Lord in their midst, exercise upon all who enter within their portals.

For Her object is to lead men on, to keep them within reach of Her power, to make them come, if it be but for half an hour in the week, under the influences of religion, and beneath the spell of that hidden Presence which draws all men unto it. Most people resent being driven, no one can resent being drawn. What is put upon them by authority seems more or less of a task. The task therefore is made as light as possible, it just obliges them to come from time to time within the influence of currents that carry multitudes on without resistance.

At the same time the vision which the Church has before Her eyes is that of the "vast multitude which no man can number of all nations and tribes and people and tongues standing before the Throne of God clad in the white robes of perfect purity". And with a strong faith in the human soul naturally Christian, the underlying longing for God, often scarcely understood, and with an undying confidence in Her own power so to express the religion of Christ that it will lay its spell upon the soul if it can reach it, She exercises the gift of prudence as to the best way to bring the greatest number under its influence.

And it is the same in the moral life. The confessionals of the Catholic Church deal with sin as it is dealt with nowhere else. There are kept up the unvarying standards of right, and yet the weakest and most sinful go away comforted and filled with the sense of God's Mercy and Goodness. The priest sits there to minister the law of God and of His Church; on the one hand he represents the inviolable holiness of the Divine law, and on the other the infinite mercy of our Lord. His education is largely to teach him how far he can go on the side of mercy by giving Absolution; what is the very least he can demand of the penitent, as a sufficient token of contrition, involved as he is perhaps in many complications and under the bondage of long-standing habits. And often he cannot ask much, he cannot expect much, It takes very little to frighten a soul in the early stages of its conversion. It is hard enough for one who has gone on deliberately for years in grievous sin to believe in God's readiness to pardon and restore him.

The office of the Priest in the confessional is therefore to awaken the soul to the sense of the grievousness of sin, and at the same time, however great the sin, to send him away feeling how good and merciful God is, He may feel that it is more than probable that it will take a long time for habit to

yield to self-control, and that there may be many lapses while there is at the time of confession a real earnest desire to do better.

There are many severe comments from outside on the laxity of the confessional, and how people are allowed to come to confession week after week, while they lapse again and again into the same sins and show little sign of improvement. But who that is a mere onlooker can tell? Who can tell of the strength of passion and the force of habit - who but the priest who has heard it, can tell of the bitter remorse, of the hopelessness that has reached almost to the verge of despair, of the sinner who is so lightly criticised. They see nothing but failure, yet there may be a growing effort, an awakening hope, a gradual realisation of the power of Divine grace which is the earnest of final victory.

Thus the Church acts as the perfect type of the peacemaker, And all who follow Her example, by unflinching fidelity to the standards of our Lord, and infinite patience and toleration of those who are weaker and more prone to evil than themselves, will gain the blessing of the peacemakers who shall be called the children of God, In such persons there will be no weakness, no sentimental condolence of sin, no loss of moral fibre. But at the same time there will be no harshness towards men, no sweeping condemnation of men as individuals or classes. They will always keep clearly in their own minds, and make it felt by others, that they draw a distinction between sin and the sinner, that the sin is always to be judged and condemned but the sinner is to be left to the all-wise and all-merciful judgment of God and to be treated with gentleness and charity. For none can tell the secrets of the human heart, and the multitude of considerations that may modify the guilt of the evil-doer, As the son of God, the peacemaker is intolerant of sin; as the

son of man, he is full of compassion, long-suffering and of great mercy towards the sinner.

And this effort in the higher sphere will educate men in the principles upon which the peacemaker must always act in the constant difficulties that arise between man and man.

No one will ever be a peacemaker who is a partizan. Those who would make peace must not take sides. Their bias will not be towards one or other of the parties at strife, but towards justice and right. When Josue of old had entered the Land of Promise and found enemies on all sides, we are told that a mysterious Personage appeared to him and stood over against him with a drawn sword in his hand, "and Josue went unto him, and said unto him, Art thou one of us or of our adversaries, and he said, No, but as Prince of the host of the Lord am I now come." Such must be the position of the peacemaker. In full sympathy with the difficulties on either side, but himself standing with the hosts of the Lord for right and justice. If he cannot enter into and sympathise with the difficulties on either side he will never draw together those who are at strife; if he brings them together by a sacrifice of principle the peace is not worth making. Thus even in the misunderstandings and differences that arise in earthly affairs, it is religion that trains a man in the true principles of the peacemaker and fits him for his work.

But there are special difficulties in our own day and our own country which call for the work of the peacemaker, and which can be but just alluded to.

We are living at a time when, in spite of much indifference, there is a vast deal of religious earnestness, and difference of religious opinion, and the air is full of controversy and questionings.

Now under such circumstances the position of a Catholic is a very difficult one. For amidst all the Babel of opinion around him he has a certainty that he has the truth, of a different character and in a far intenser degree than that of a member of any other body of Christians. He knows in fact that the Catholic Church is the pillar and ground of the truth, and in so far as other bodies differ from Her in matters of faith he knows that they are wrong.

He knows moreover that there can be no lasting peace based on any other foundation than that of truth, and that truth and untruth cannot come to terms of peace in the human soul.

But here again he must keep clear in his mind the difference between untruth in the abstract and in the concrete. The untruth of a false and imperfect system, and that held by an individual belonging to the system. We must rightly hate and condemn every religious system that holds men in the bondage of untruth or withholds them from the liberty that truth alone can give. But our attitude towards those who belong to such systems must be very different, if we would act as their peacemakers by leading them to the truth.

1. In the first place, we must be very sure of the truth ourselves. We must know well the truth to which we would bring them. Know it, not merely with a kind of traditional knowledge, from the fact that we have been brought up in it from infancy, but clearly, definitely, intelligently. We must, so to speak, see all round it, so as to be able to meet objections and to express it in language that is not exaggerated or likely to lead to misapprehension. Many have been kept back from a consideration of some doctrine of the Catholic Church because they have heard it expressed in language that really misrepresents it. The spiritual

diplomatist must therefore be well schooled in all the aspects of the cause which he would plead.

2. But, secondly, he must know, and not only know, but be able, if only for the moment, to throw himself into some sort of intellectual sympathy with the position of those whom he would win round.

If he does not know and cannot understand their difficulties he will be arguing in the dark, and will surely only alienate those whom he desires to win. A great number of people take little interest in the faiths of others, they do not understand, nor do they want to understand them. Very well. They are quite justified in their aloofness. They have perhaps neither the time, nor the talent, nor the sympathy that would lead them to such studies. But let them keep out of controversy and avoid any effort to win these people to the Truth. In this department, at least, they have neither the talents nor vocation of a peacemaker. And their efforts, if they make any, are likely to do more harm than good.

The peacemaker must, if he is to be at all equipped for his work, be in sympathy with both sides. He must be able to see clearly another's difficulty, the element of truth perhaps enveloped in a vast deal that is untrue, to separate the chaff from the wheat, and to preserve every grain of wheat, to detect the point where untruth has a hold on the mind, and to measure the strength of its hold; to show often that the error that is held is but the misrepresentation of a truth. And all this involves patience, knowledge and a large-minded sympathy.

3. And, thirdly, no man can ever act as a peacemaker in matters of religious belief who allows his mind for a moment to entertain a doubt of the sincerity of the men with whom he is dealing.

It is a narrow, hard, uncharitable view of men to suppose that because their position seems to you illogical and absurd they must themselves realise that it is so. It is very difficult to see the inconsistencies of a system in which one has been brought up from childhood; and intelligent, well-educated men who in every other department of life are sane and reasonable, in religious matters will often be found to have left aside all reason.

To approach a man, therefore, on controversial questions, whose good faith one doubts or disbelieves in, is to insult him.

With these qualifications then, the Catholic can go forth into the world equipped for the delicate task of bringing others under the dominion of the truth which shall make them free.

Blessed are They that Suffer Persecution for Justice' Sake for Theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven

This is the last of the Beatitudes, Its blessing can only be gained by those who have lived under the laws and attained somewhat of the Blessings of those which have gone before. It does not come at the beginning of the spiritual life, but only when that life has attained its full maturity. There is nothing unreal or bearing the slightest taint of unreality in the



spiritual life, There are no demands upon the soul that are unreasonable, or that would endanger its assuming a pose either inwardly or outwardly. Its growth is like all healthy growths, a gradual development from very small beginnings, "first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear". It would be absurd for a child to affect the manners and methods of a man in the natural order, and it would be worse than absurd in the spiritual order. We are not therefore expected in our spiritual childhood to manifest the graces and virtues that can only be gained by years of effort and prayer.

And it needs a long training in self-control, a deep insight into the true meaning and proportion of things around us, a charity towards man that never faileth, and a paramount love for God to be able to attain the blessing that is here offered to the persecuted.

Therefore for those who have gone but a little way on the road to Heaven, and in whom there are still apparent many faults of character and who have as yet but a very superficial knowledge of themselves, to pretend to anything like rejoicing in persecution, whether the persecution comes from friend or foe, from their co-religionist or those of different creeds, from suffering body or tortured mind, would be nothing short of unreality and self-deception, If they can gain the grace to bear such things with some degree of patience and to strive to keep their hearts from bitterness, they are doing all that can be expected of them, and give the best evidence of the possibility of attaining the blessing of the Beatitude in years to come. We must know God before we can rejoice in His Will, and we must have caught some dim vision of the Kingdom of Heaven before we are ready to surrender all that this world has to give us and to rejoice in its antagonism.

For there are those strange beings who without a doubt take pleasure in the thought of being persecuted. Who make their religion and their religious practices a source of such disquiet wherever they go that they arouse impatient comment and criticism from even the most patient, and this they take a secret joy in, regarding it as persecution. They will not allow their friends to leave them alone, they lash them into controversy and antagonism. They like to think that they are hated of all men for the Kingdom of Heaven's sake, whereas, as a matter of fact, if they are hated at all it is for their inhuman tactlessness, and the last thing imaginable that has to do with it is the Kingdom of Heaven. Men must be very sure indeed that they hate no one before they can expect any blessing from being hated of all men, and that they speak no evil of man or of his religious convictions, falsely, before they experience any blessing or can rejoice and be exceeding glad with any hope that such joy comes from a heavenly source, when men speak evil of

them. It is so easy to transfer in our hearts the cause of antagonism from our own faults and blunders and bad taste to our religion, and to assume the pose of martyrs, when that of penitents would be more becoming. It is to be feared that there are not a few who make both themselves and the Kingdom of Heaven hateful, and secretly wonder that their hearts are not suffused with the Divine sweetness of the Beatitude of the persecuted.

Personal religion is not a matter to be talked of and gossiped about, or to be dragged before the public, nor its practices to be flaunted in the eyes of those who do not understand it; it should rather burn in the heart as a secret fire that shines in and radiates forth from the life. It is like the wind which bloweth where it listeth, but men cannot tell whence it cometh or whither it goeth. It encircles its true votaries in a Heavenly atmosphere that is felt to come from an unknown source. The hatred it engenders is not the hatred that is caused by the patent faults and obtrusiveness of so-called religious people, but the hatred that springs from the world's-fear of the supernatural. From the sight of lives and virtues that it cannot understand and cannot bring down to its level.

The blessing and the joy therefore which our Lord promises to those who are persecuted for justice' sake is not one that draws its consolations from any human source. There must be no taint of secret pleasure in the fact of being in opposition, or of being misunderstood. No true man *likes* to differ from those around him, or finds the least enjoyment in accentuating his difference, on the contrary he rejoices in being at one with his fellow-creatures. Any such pleasure in eccentricity, or in what is sometimes dignified by the name of independence, has no relation whatever to the joy of the Beatitude. On the contrary the Beatitude springs out of human sorrow and distress: "There springs up a light in the

darkness and joyful gladness for those that are true of heart". It is for those who under the compulsion of conscience and driven by the force of overwhelming conviction, for the love of God and Truth are ready, though with sadness and anguish of heart, to bear misunderstanding and reproach from those who are nearest and dearest to them. And to such, in their solitude and distress, and growing as it were out of the darkness that envelops them, there dawns upon them the Heavenly vision flooding the soul with peace and the heart with Divine consolation.

It is such persecution, endured for the sake of Christ alone, a persecution of whatever kind brought upon us not by our imperfections or want of tact and common sense, but by our fidelity to conscience and to God, that brings with it the consolation and the joy of the Beatitude. It is supernatural in its cause and in its effects.

Be it therefore remembered again that this Beatitude is the last, the result of all the training and discipline and prayer involved in gaining the blessings of those that went before. It is for a soul that has already learned to conquer self, to endure suffering and sorrow with calmness, to find in God a present help in trouble, and to be gentle and loving in a world that is often cruel and selfish, He who has not passed through this school and learned its lessons will not be able to gain the final and crowning reward, the reward of the martyr in will if not in deed. The man who has grown hard and cynical under opposition, or who, however much he has suffered in the cause of truth and right, is sceptical of the good faith of those who differ from him, and loud and harsh in his criticism, and stern to himself has become stern to others, also stirs up an antagonism that is only natural and merits no supernatural blessing. The Beatitude of the

persecuted is the Beatitude of the Saints, or of those who are very near to sanctity.

Now it may be noticed that there is a close connection between this and the first Beatitude. The reward in both cases is the same, "theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven". And the subject-matter of both is the same, the external circumstances and surroundings in which we live.

The first is the blessing promised to those who allow no external things to master them, but keep them in their place as servants and use them as means of approach to God. Under the law of this Beatitude we see men struggling against the attraction of outward things, feeling the need of them and at the same time the danger; how they are forced by the necessities of Nature to use them, and yet in their use they run the risk of falling under their power.

But the last Beatitude contemplates a very different state of things. It is not against the attraction of the creatures that the battle has here to be fought, but the reverse. These things that once were loved so much, perhaps too much, have as it were risen up against the man who strove against their magnetic charm, and assaulted him and sought to drive him into revolt against God, If they cannot win him they will wound him. The servant of God endures the last great onslaught from the creatures he sought to make his servants; they will master him by fear if not by love. All things are arrayed against him. The smile of the world that wooed and almost won him has turned into an angry frown and its caress into a brutal assault. "If thou wilt fall down and worship me all shall be Thine," so said the Prince of this world of old to our Lord; "but if not, I will raise all in revolt and crush the life out of Thee."

How different are these trials - the trial of seduction and of hatred. Yet he who would receive the full measure of the blessings offered by our Lord in the Beatitudes must endure both. They are the tests of untried youth full of the visions of beauty and hope and idealism, and of mature years or of one who stands upon the threshold of old age. The evening and the morning make the little day of each man's experience, and some who have borne well and bravely the testing of youth and kept their hearts for God, amidst all the attraction of the world, have failed in the evening under the crushing blows of the world's hatred. Yet we must endure the testing that comes with both the morning and evening ere we can pass on to the rest of the Sabbath of a cloudless eternity.

It is one thing to struggle with the body, alive and astir with the warm pulses of youth, lest it should subdue the soul to its servitude, but it is a very different thing to find that body no longer a seducer but an enemy that shows its claws and fangs. A refined instrument of exquisite torture, the brain on fire with thoughts that it seems impossible to control, the heart faint with weakness, every nerve athrob. The pleasures of the senses have failed to seduce, now the body tries what pain will do.

It is one thing to strive lest the absorbing interest of work should give no time for higher thoughts, it is a very different thing to find the work become a burden and distress, refusing to get done, hanging like lead around the neck - no longer an interest but a weary strain.

Once you fought hard to keep possession of your heart, lest friendship and affections should take too strong a hold upon you and lead you as they willed. It was a noble and a healthy warfare. But now old friends have died or gone their way, you have been compelled to take a line in life that is not understood, and have been pursued by criticism,

misunderstanding, and opposition; there is no longer the danger of loving men too much, but of the heart, hungry and disappointed, turning away in bitterness and solitude.

Even the inanimate things around you seem to have gained a life of their own for the purpose of tormenting you. The things that gave pleasure give pain, the flavour of life is gone. You stand no longer in a world that you are trying not to love too much, but in a world that has become violently and aggressively antagonistic. There is no further danger of its courting, the danger is lest you should be crushed under its persecution.

Now it seems strange - it has always been a puzzle to devout minds - why such things should be allowed. After all, God is the Lord and Ruler of all. It is easy to imagine that God's creation should turn upon the man who violates the laws and commands of its Creator. But it seems bewildering to one's moral sense that such things should be allowed to happen to a person whose only desire is to serve God and to use all to His Glory. It is always a puzzle, always a fresh source of trial to every soul who experiences it or witnesses it.

But it is well to bear in mind that while such difficulties are great indeed, we must not exaggerate them. There are many trials and failures that fall to the lot of good people which ought not to trouble us as being in any way connected with the mystery of God's dealings with man - the fact is, there is really no mystery about them at all. The explanation lies in the relation of cause to effect. If we see a certain effect we seek at once for the cause. And the cause of what is called success, worldly prosperity, etc. is not a life of prayer or the constant frequenting of the sacraments, but industry, hard work, and certain natural gifts, If religion were warranted to produce wealth or success, many would become religious to

gain these things, The fruits of Religion are union with our Lord, victory over sin, the vision of God, and the things of the Spirit. But there is no necessary connection whatever between frequent communion and success on the Stock Exchange, or daily attendance at Mass and a flourishing business. It cannot with any reason be said: "Here is a man who goes to Holy Communion every day of his life, and yet he fails in every business enterprise - isn't it strange?" No, certainly not, his failure is assuredly not because he goes to Holy Communion every day, but because he is lacking in the gifts that ensure success in such matters, or because he does not go about his business in the way that warrants success, It would be a perilous thing for human life if God were to supply through religion the qualifications which are ordinarily acquired in the affairs of this life by hard work and strenuous effort. "He that soweth to the spirit shall of the spirit reap everlasting life," but not necessarily the best fruits of life on earth. Such fruits are for those who lay themselves out to win them by every means in their power, sometimes by means that religion forbids and condemns, The Holy Ghost bestows many gifts upon those who are the faithful servants of God, but they are spiritual gifts, and they do not include amongst their number those which fit a man to make a fortune; they are supernatural, these others are either natural endowments, or acquired by sharp wits and the severe training of the market-place.

Therefore if a man is very devout and very religious and utterly unbusiness-like, there is no mystery in the fact that in worldly affairs he may eventually fall amongst the submerged tenth. We must not look in the effect for results that are not in the cause. One might indeed just as well, and with equal reason, express surprise that a man who devoted his life to the acquisition of wealth did not thereby gain great gifts of prayer and an intimate knowledge of God. As a man sows, so shall he reap. And he who sows and labours for

a spiritual harvest will as surely - more surely - gain its legitimate results, as he who sows and labours for worldly prosperity - more surely, for the one never fails, the other often does.

But we may go farther. There is no necessary antithesis between religion and success in the affairs of life. On the contrary, religion trains and develops the whole character, bestowing many gifts which we have not by nature, and compelling us, so far as we are obedient to its commands, to do with all our will and all our power whatever our duty calls us to do. So far therefore as the effects of religion are concerned they should make a man at his very best all round. It will not allow him to be slipshod or half-hearted in what he undertakes. If he is unbusiness-like in the affairs of life, it is not because he is religious, but because he is not true to the commands of religion. His religion bids him do it with all his might, do all to the glory of God, and God is not glorified by a man who brings aspersions upon his faith as making him incapable of work.

It has been often said that one of the causes of the lack of prosperity in Ireland is, that the minds of the people are so fixed upon the things of the other world that they do not think it worth while to do the work of this world, I believe such an apology to be the greatest and most subtle condemnation of the religion of the people of Ireland, It implies that the Catholic Faith unfits a man to take his proper place in life, and do his duty where God has put him, Or it means, still worse, that this world with its manifold calls and claims to work, is no fitting place of discipline and preparation for the next. It is in direct opposition to the whole teaching of our Lord and His Apostles, And it implies that if a man desires to save his soul and be faithful to our Lord he must give up the world and enter a convent.

According to the teaching of the Catholic Church, on the contrary, life in the world is the ordinary condition of life. The religious life is not an escape from duty nor the result of a man's personal tastes or wishes, but the outcome of a Divine vocation. Our Lord legislated for the married state, and sanctified matrimony by making it a Sacrament, the Church speaks of it as the holy state of matrimony. Saint Paul speaks of the union of the married couple as the type of the union of Christ with His Church, and Holy Scripture constantly speaks of the Church as the Bride of Christ. We are told again of one who having been healed by our Lord desired to join that band of followers who left all to follow Him, and our Lord's answer was: "Go back home and tell those at home what great things the Lord hath done for thee".

All this involves a life in the world, not the cloister. In the Parable of the talents our Lord teaches the very practical lesson that the gifts of God are to be developed in the strain and pressure of life's struggle and competition, and the man who was punished was he who wrapped his talent in a napkin and hid it in the earth - the shirker, the incompetent, the sluggard. These talents may be taken no doubt as spiritual gifts, but they certainly do not exclude natural gifts, and in the imagery of the Parable it was in the market-place that they were to be developed.

So far therefore from attributing failure in such cases as we have been considering to the effect of religion, it is the reverse. The man who is unbusinesslike and neglects or scamps the work that duty calls him to do, even if he does so to gain more time for the practices of religion, suffers not because of his religion, but because of some unfaithfulness to it. In proportion as a man is really religious he ought to be the best man all round, best developed, best fitted for the struggle of life, best in whatever position God has placed

him. One cannot imagine our Lord in the carpenter's shop at Nazareth doing the menial work He had undertaken in any but the most perfect way possible, or that the exaltation of His mind on Heavenly things interfered with the lowly work of earth.

Let us therefore not exaggerate the difficulties that good people have to suffer upon earth. It is a deep mystery that they should have to suffer as they do. But let us keep clearly before us the distinction between the sufferings that are a mystery, and those that men bring upon themselves by their own incompetence.

And it may be well in this connection to remember that the Grace of God, and prayer, however earnest, do not remedy the evil effects of the violation of Nature's laws, and that a foolish thing done in the service of God will ordinarily have just the same bad results as a foolish thing done for the most worldly of motives. A man who overstrains his mind by too much prayer will suffer just as much and in the same way as one who overstrains it in business. The motive does not set one free from the natural law. Yet there are not a few who lay aside all prudence and common sense in the name of religion, and wonder that God who sees the motive does not protect them from the disastrous results. But God would have us reasonable beings as well as spiritual beings, and teaches us, or, if we will not learn it, teaches others through us, that the natural law and the spiritual law go hand in hand.

Many therefore who wonder at the mystery of suffering would do better if they wondered at their own unreasonableness in the practice of their religion, and took their sufferings as the lash with which Nature seeks to drive them back into the pathway of reason.

Such sufferings do not come under the law of the Beatitude, nor do they receive its blessing; the persecution of an overwrought brain, of a morbid melancholy induced by too much introspection, of strained nerves and a sickly body, are not always the sufferings for justice' sake, but very often for injustice in violating the law of Nature.

But when all this has been said, and due weight has been given to the failures and sufferings that are induced by natural causes, and that cannot be dignified by the name of the Mystery of God's dealings with man, there is enough and more than enough left to cause perplexity to the devout mind. Only those who never think at all, or those who see all things in the light of Divine Faith, can fail to be harassed and bewildered by the grave moral questions that the contemplation of God's dealings with His faithful servants stirs in their minds.

For the Beatitude contemplates the possibility, not merely of failure, or of being worsted in the battle of life, but of direct opposition and bitter antagonism. It is not negative, but positive.

Here is a man who has placed himself under the laws of perfection, who desires nothing so much as to do God's Will and to live at peace with and be a blessing to his fellow-creatures, and to do this has undergone a long and severe schooling in the practice of self-discipline, or as men like to put it nowadays, has placed himself in harmony with the laws of the universe. And the world rises up against him. It will not leave him alone. It refuses to take his offered blessings. It opposes, reviles, hates and persecutes him. And everything seems to go against him. God's world somehow does not appear to approve of its Creator's friends, and deals more kindly with His enemies or with those who ignore him.

But those who love Him most and serve Him best arouse opposition, contempt and persecution.

And this mystery though so old always seems new to every new sufferer. It comes to him as a surprise and disturbs him with perplexities as though it had never happened before. That is the keenness of suffering, especially suffering through the injustice of others. We see it around us, we feel its presence in the world, we know it is here, and see its victims everywhere. Yet when it comes to me, it seems to be something new, never really known before, something surprising and intolerable. The complaints that have been wrung from the lips of countless multitudes come from mine. The words of consolation which I have spoken to others sound a mockery to myself. I stand alone. There is a sharp edge that cuts me as none has ever been wounded before.

It is good therefore to remember that he who suffers in the cause of God and of truth does not, as a matter of fact, stand alone. He is one of a great multitude that no man can number of all nations and people and kingdoms and tongues. Reaching back through the history of the world to the very gate of Eden, when Abel the first martyr suffered through the narrowness, jealousy and intolerance of his brother.

And the persecutions of today, however real, are mild compared with those that stain the records of the past. The world's real benefactors have always been treated by it as its enemies. When Christ came down to show men the way of salvation they nailed Him to the cross. When they were offered their choice between the greatest Benefactor the world has ever known and a thief and murderer, they chose Barabas and delivered Jesus to death. And this was but the greatest and most awful instance of what the world has always done.

There is nothing more remarkable than the way in which men of every age have treated those who came to them with any new truth or higher standard of right. They have been met not merely with the dead-weight of ignorance and indifference but with violent antagonism. Every forward step in the history of our race has been at the cost of bitter suffering and misrepresentation, often of the death of those who would lead it onward. We do not realise that the commonplace truths that rule and enlarge our life today had to fight to get a hearing, and that the teachers of those truths were reviled, persecuted and hated of all men, and that we who enjoy the blessings which they have brought us, had we lived in their day would probably have taken our part in the opposition. Even in the enlightenment and boasted breadth of modern life, many oppose with all their might the teachers of those truths which are for their welfare. Their eyes are holden that they cannot see them. Whether in science, politics, art, literature or religion, it has been, and probably will be to the end of time, the same. The truths are misrepresented or misunderstood, and their teachers are treated with scorn and surrounded by an atmosphere of suspicion. Some of us live to see our mistake, and look back with shame at our misconception of and antagonism to that which has brought us light, healing and liberty.

The words of our Lord are true in their largest sense: "Your fathers slew the Prophets, and their children build their tombs".

And this opposition has always reached its keenest and bitterest form in matters of religion. The *odium theologicum* is proverbial. We may talk as we will of the spirit of toleration in our own day, but it is scarcely worth boasting of. Intolerance may take a less savage form, but it is there, nevertheless, and it can be aroused today as easily as when

a few bigoted men, moved with envy, stirred the multitudes to demand the death of Jesus. Men of no religious convictions are often the most bitterly intolerant of those of deep conviction. Men who boast loudest of liberty of conscience heap ridicule and contempt upon those whose consciences lead them to other conclusions than their own, and would if they could stamp out all liberty. Here in England in the twentieth century in many a Christian home there are not a few whose lives are made almost intolerable by the petty persecution which they have to endure year after year for conscience' sake.

Untruth somehow seems stronger - if but for the moment - than truth, and wrong than right. There is nothing more pathetic in history than the sight of the power - the temporary power - of evil over good. In the perspective of the ages we see, indeed, the reverse, but those who suffered for right and truth had to suffer, often die in the darkness; the reaction came later. The strength of truth and goodness lies in its inherent vitality; it can bide its time, for it is eternal. When it seems slain and trampled under the feet of men, lo! it is alive again, and with all the greater vigour because of the opposition. The strength of evil and untruth, on the other hand, is the strength of violence and passion, and false hopes and promises that are soon exposed. Wrong cannot afford to wait; it knows that it has but a short time. Truth and right can wait with the certainty that in the long run they must gain the victory. They are like the Rider in the Apocalypse, with crowns of victory on His head even before the battle has begun. The lives of great men and women have suffered at the hands of the most worthless. Saint John the Baptist is slain through the whim of a dancing-girl and the spite of an angry woman. The history of the first days of Christianity is a history of how the noblest lives were sacrificed often to the most sordid and the basest passions - jealousy, lust, anger, intrigue, personal spite.

Nothing has been too small or low to employ as a weapon against the teachers of Truth and Righteousness, nothing too weak, apparently, to destroy them. And so goodness was driven out by evil, and falsehood triumphed over Truth, and those who would bless the world with the knowledge and gifts that it needed were reviled and persecuted. But the generations have risen up and called them blessed, and have turned their hatred upon their persecutors.

Those, therefore, who have to suffer in the cause of God may take comfort in the thought, that, however lonely and isolated they feel, they belong to a vast multitude that cannot be numbered - the world's great benefactors whom it has learnt to bless because they had the courage to withstand it; and that as a matter of fact it is those who give in to it, whom in the long run it forgets or despises. They may encourage themselves therefore with the thought that they suffer from a moment's opposition to be followed by an age-long appreciation.

But however comforting such considerations may be, it is not for rewards like these that men will endure to the end.

The reward of the Beatitude is not the possession of the Kingdom of Earth, but of the Kingdom of Heaven. It is wholly supernatural. The soul that has already learnt much in the school of the Beatitudes is being put to the last and final test. It is being searched through and through by the fire of persecution. If it can stand this and rise through it the training has done its work. If there be a flaw it will disclose itself. It is the last Beatitude, and it teaches us that it is possible for a man to stand not only alone, but with all the world against him and to be happy. Not because he is indifferent to human appreciation and human affection, for that would be no virtue, nor because he despises the things of earth, for, on the contrary, he reverences and values all

that God has created, nor yet because he is indifferent to the judgments of men, for in the school in which he has been trained his heart has become very tender towards his fellow-creatures, but because he has turned to God as his Comforter, he has learned to see the true value and proportion of things in Him. The light of Heaven encircles him, and his solitude is enlivened by Heavenly companionship. Through the cracking and splitting surface of earthly things the light and sounds of the Heavenly Kingdom flow in upon him and flood his soul with peace, and while the tears of earthly sorrow fill his eyes, he rejoices and is exceeding glad.

The work done under the training of all the other Beatitudes is tested, completed, and rewarded in this. So, as Stephen was stoned, his face was as the face of an angel, and he saw our Lord standing at the right hand of God. So in the arena, amidst the wild shouts of an angry multitude, and under sword and flame and rack the martyrs could sing Te Deums and pray for and pardon their persecutors, They felt not so much that the world was against them as that God was with them, and in His light they saw light.

But the Beatitude has, I think, a wider application. There is a persecution which many have to endure not from people but from things.

We know what it is to be in harmony with ourselves and with all that is around us, a mind serene and calm, a body unruffled by suffering or disturbed by passion, the apt and ready servant of the soul, and the external surroundings of our life in full accord with our tastes and wishes. The inner life and its external circumstances swing in perfect harmony and rhythm.

Such is often the case in childhood and early youth. The sun of a buoyant and vigorous life shines from within and sheds its radiance on all around us. Hope, like the warm breath of spring, stirs through the soul and calls its manifold powers to action, and the world bathed in its light bids it come forth and try them.

And then as time goes on hope becomes dimmed and clouded by disappointment. There are jars and discords between the inner life and the outer. Conscience awakens and forbids many things, and issues commands that are hard to obey. Then the harmony of the inner life is disturbed. There is strife and discord in the very sanctuary of the soul. It cannot do the things that it would. The will becomes surly and discontented. Inclination calls one way, reason and conscience another. Passion, like the first murmur of a coming storm, makes itself heard. Soon the light and budding life of spring are swept away as it breaks with all its fury. Then the body awakes like a giant, awakes and wrestles with the soul for dominion, and in the fierce conflict the strongest forces of man's nature are arrayed one against the other. The flesh lusts against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary the one to the other. An intense dualism is set up, and can never be allayed save by the subjection of the flesh to the spirit or the spirit to the flesh. Action in the external sphere is weakened by the inner conflict. The very appearance of outward things becomes changed and deceptive. The judgment is at fault. The light of reason dimmed. The call of the outer world is no longer to come forth and do, but to come forth to an endless struggle, with the issue uncertain. The atmosphere is charged with antagonism. The harmony that reigned between the man and his surroundings is gone for ever. He is at war with them or they with him, he can hardly tell which. Things that were a help become a hindrance. Things that were a joy to do became a burden and a sorrow. Things that crowded upon

him and clamoured with the offer of their service, take flight and leave him or turn and rend him.

Under such circumstances and in the loneliness and desolation in which the soul finds itself, there are two offers of help constantly appealing to it. One to give up the struggle and find peace by surrender, This is the offer from below. The strife and suffering, it says, spring from fighting against your own nature and circumstances which are too strong for you; give up the fight and you shall have peace. The other comes from above. It comes from the Lips of our Lord. It says - you cannot fight this battle alone; you were never intended to fight alone; if you will, I will help you. Come and learn in the school in which I will teach you and give you strength, There you will find the light that never fails, the grace that imparts eternal youth and vigour.

It rests with each man to decide for himself, and by the issue of that decision he must abide. If he accepts the one, he will find peace indeed, but it will be a peace purchased at the loss of all that is worth having; he will become a poor drifting willess thing borne hither and thither by the currents around him and the stronger currents of passion and inclination within. If he accepts the other, he must place himself under the stern discipline of those laws laid down by our Lord in the Beatitudes, the laws of liberty, whereby he will become master of himself and of the world around him, But in the struggle that this involves he will gain far more. He will find the sweet companionship of One Who will be ever by his side, Who will lay open to him the secrets and the joys of a larger and a nobler life. He will rise into the supernatural, He will see, first dimly, then ever more and more clearly, the golden spires and strong battlements of the Kingdom of Heaven, whose walls are salvation, whose gates are peace, and in that Kingdom his solitude will be comforted by the Communion of Saints, his weakness

strengthened by partaking of the very Life of Christ Himself, and God will wipe away all tears from his eyes. He will experience the blessing of the servant of God, the skilled combatant in the battle of life: "Blessed are the persecuted, for they shall be called the children of God".

About This Ebook

The text of this ebook is taken from the book *Laws of the Spiritual Life* by Father Basil William Maturin. The edition used was published by Longmans, Green and Co. of London, England in 1916.

The book has the Nihil obstat of Father Herbert Thurston, S.J., Censor deputatus, and the Imprimi potest of Bishop William Anthony Johnson, Archdiocese of Westminster, England, 14 January 1907.

The cover image is a page showing The Eight Beatitudes, illuminated by Dirc van Delf, c.1402. The original is in the Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, Maryland. The image was swiped from [Wikimedia Commons](#).

The image in the chapter [The Principles of the Beatitudes](#) is a photograph of the Blessed Sacrament altar by Rodolfo Vantini and Michelangelo Grigoletti. It is in the New Cathedral in Brescia, Italy, was photographed on 15 December 2020 by Wolfgang Moroder, and the image swiped from Wikimedia Commons.

The image in the chapter [Blessed are the Poor in Spirit](#) is a detail of an Easter-themed stained glass window, date and artist unknown in Christ Church, Waltham, Massachusetts. It was photographed on 14 December 2005 by Mbalulescu, and the image swiped from Wikimedia Commons.

The image in the chapter [Blessed are the Meek](#) is an 1873 illustration of the publican from the Parable of the Pharisee and the Publican, artist unknown.

The image in the chapter [Blessed are They that Hunger and Thirst after Justice](#) is a photograph of an unnamed Nigerian man in deep prayer. He was photographed on 23 April 2021 by Theindigochxid, and the images was swiped from Wikimedia Commons.

The image in the chapter [Blessed are the Merciful](#) is a wood engraving print of The Prodigal Son being received by his father. The illustration is by John Everett Millais, 1864. The original is in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, New York, and the image swiped from Wikimedia Commons.

The image in the chapter [Blessed are the Clean of Heart](#) is a detail of a marble bas-relief statue of 'The Angel of Purity' by Augustus Saint-Gaudens, 1902. The original is in the Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. It was photographed on 3 May 2012 by Smuconlaw, and the image swiped from Wikimedia Commons.

The image in the chapter [Blessed are the Peacemakers](#) is a detail of a bas-relief sculpture of hands of friendship, date and artist unknown. It is part of the town hall in Duisburg, Germany. It was photographed on 12 April 2010 by Oceancetacen, and the image was swiped from Wikimedia Commons.

The image in the chapter [Blessed are They that Suffer Persecution](#) is a detail of a stained glass window depicting the martyrdom of a Christian. It is by the Binsfeld-Dornoff Company, Trier, Germany c.1920, and is in the church of Saint Clements in Trittenheim an der Mosel, Germany. The window was photographed on 30 June 2006 by Norbert Schnitzler, and the image swiped from Wikimedia Commons.

For more free ebooks, other material by or about thousands of saints, beati, venerables, servants of God, devotions, or

the history of the Church, come see us at -

CatholicSaints.Info

** or **

CatholicSaints.Mobi

